

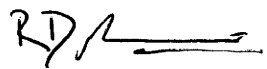
**THE NEW CALEDONIAN WRITTEN PRESS AND THE
POLITICS OF KANAK CULTURE AND IDENTITY:
continuities and discontinuities in the discursive
representation of three cultural events (1975–2005)**

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of
The Australian National University

December 2011

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree in the same or other form to any university.



07/09/2012

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Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would particularly like to thank my supervisor, Peter Brown, who gave me the opportunity to undertake a doctoral thesis on this subject as part of a broader Australian Research Council project, co-directed with Darrell Tryon. Thank you, Peter, for sharing your passion and keen insight in relation to New Caledonia, and for your guidance and encouragement throughout my doctoral candidature in relation to all of my academic endeavours. I would also like to thank Darrell Tryon for his support and advice.

Bronwen Douglas's comments on my thesis were very helpful – thank you for your advice, Bronwen. I would also like to thank Lali Foster for her comments on my Introduction.

I am very grateful to all those in Kanaky/New Caledonia who so generously assisted me with my research and helped me to a better understanding of their country, including particularly Louis-José Barbançon, Jenny Briffa, Narcisse Decoiré, Christophe Dervieux and his colleagues at the New Caledonian *Service des Archives*, Karine Dervieux, Laurent Edo, Yves-Béalo Gony, Jacques Boengkih, Déwé Gorodey, Elise Huffer, Emmanuel Kasarhérou, Ismet Kurtovitch, Bernard Maepas, Hamid Mokaddem, Solange Néaoutyine and her staff at the Museum of New Caledonia, Sylvain Pabouty, Marie-Claude Tjibaou and the staff at the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou*. I would also like to thank Nic Maclellan and Benoît Trépied for their help.

I could not have completed this thesis without my wonderful family, especially Mum, Dad, Graeme, Alice, Esther, Mac and Gwen, and my friends. Thank you all for your unfailing patience, support, encouragement and love.

I would finally like to thank the Australian Research Council and the Australian National University for their financial support.

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a comparative critical discourse analysis of the contemporaneous coverage in the New Caledonian written press of three significant cultural events: the *Mélanésie 2000* festival in 1975, the inauguration of the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou* in 1998 and the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative from 2003 to 2005. Each of these events engaged a particular politics of Kanak culture and identity within New Caledonia's pluri-cultural society, which is internally divided over the question of decolonisation. Each event was oriented towards promoting significant socio-political changes within New Caledonian society as a whole, associated with the 'restitution' of Kanak culture and identity, Kanak indigeneity and sovereignty, and the political primacy of Kanak agency and legitimacy. The analysis presented in this thesis of the discursive representations in the local written press of these events demonstrates the latter's complex and contested nature, both within and beyond the Kanak community.

The thesis identifies a number of discursive strategies, each with significant political implications, which were mobilised by the local written press. These include the construction of Kanak culture, identity and 'custom' as either inherently political or, conversely, as a-political and politically irrelevant; the projection of particular models of social 'consensus' onto New Caledonian society as a whole; the selective attribution of agency; the construction and mobilisation of a hierarchically ordered binary opposition between 'authentic' and 'inauthentic'; the appropriation and reformulation of the discourse and politics of Kanak '*accueil*'; the construction of particular historical narratives with their selective continuities and discontinuities.

The comparative critical discourse analysis of the local print-media coverage of the three events constituted by *Mélanésie 2000*, the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou* and the *Mwâ Kâ* illustrates the way in which certain discursive strategies can have ambivalent political effects, and have often been mobilised for highly divergent political ends. The analysis also demonstrates the print media's predominant resistance throughout the contemporary period to the most radical political implications (for questions of sovereignty and legitimacy in New Caledonia) of Kanak identity as indigenous and of certain Kanak 'customary' structures, processes and actions. Nevertheless, the analysis highlights that, as the local socio-political context has evolved, the politics of Kanak

culture and identity mobilised through events such as *Mélanésie 2000*, the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou* and the *Mwâ Kâ* has become increasingly accepted and appropriated by the local written press, notwithstanding the fact that this acceptance and appropriation remains partial and strategic.

A consideration and comparison of the tensions and issues associated with these three events in their respective socio-political contexts, through an analysis of their contemporaneous treatment in the local written press, is also used to shed light on some of the questions associated with the 1998 Noumea Accord and the ongoing political and social debates to which it has given rise.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

New Caledonian print-media publication titles

LC:	<i>Les Calédoniens</i>
LCB:	<i>Le Chien bleu</i>
CLL:	<i>Construire les Loyauté</i>
LFA:	<i>La France Australe</i>
LI:	<i>Les Infos</i>
LJC:	<i>Le Journal Calédonien</i>
LNC:	<i>Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes</i>
LNH:	Les Nouvelles Hebdo (before 2002); <i>Le Nouvel Hebdo</i> (from 2002)
TDC:	<i>Tour de Côte</i>

General

ACAPIK:	<i>Association pour la commémoration de l'année des peuples indigènes en Kanaky</i> (became the CNDPA in 1995)
ADCC:	<i>Agence de développement de la culture canaque</i>
ADCK:	<i>Agence de développement de la culture kanak</i>
ADRAF:	<i>Agence de développement rural et d'aménagement foncier</i>
AICLF:	<i>Association des Indigènes Calédoniens et Loyaltiens Français</i>
CAUGERN:	<i>Comité autochtone de gestion des ressources naturelles</i>
CCI:	<i>Comité de coordination des indépendantistes</i>
CCT:	<i>Centre Culturel Tjibaou</i>
CES:	<i>Comité économique et social</i> (<i>Conseil économique et social</i> from 1999)
CNDPA:	<i>Conseil National des Droits du Peuple Autochtone</i> (formerly the ACAPIK)
Cofap:	<i>Comité organisateur du Festival des Arts du Pacifique</i>
CSTNC:	<i>Confédération Syndicale des Travailleurs de Nouvelle-Calédonie</i>
DOM-TOM:	<i>Départements et Territoires d'Outre-Mer</i>
EDS:	<i>Entente Démocratique et Sociale</i>
FI:	<i>Front Indépendantiste</i>

FLNKS:	<i>Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste</i>
FNSC:	<i>Fédération pour une nouvelle société calédonienne</i>
FULK:	<i>Front uni de libération kanak</i>
GIGN:	<i>Groupe d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale</i>
LKS:	<i>Libération Kanak Socialiste</i>
MLC:	<i>Mouvement Libéral Calédonien</i>
MPF:	<i>Mouvement pour la France</i>
OCC:	<i>Office calédonien des cultures</i>
OCSTC:	<i>Office Culturel, Scientifique et Technique Canaque</i>
Palika:	<i>Parti de libération kanak</i>
PSC:	<i>Parti socialiste calédonien</i>
PT:	<i>Parti travailliste</i>
Rassemblement–UMP or RUMP:	<i>Rassemblement–Union pour un mouvement populaire</i> (formerly RPC; RPCR)
RPC:	<i>Rassemblement pour la Calédonie</i> (became RPCR in 1978 and the <i>Rassemblement–UMP</i> or RUMP in 2004)
RPCR:	<i>Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République</i> (formerly RPC; became the <i>Rassemblement–UMP</i> or RUMP in 2004)
RPR:	<i>Rassemblement pour la République</i> (became UMP in 2005)
RRB:	<i>Radio Rythme Bleu</i>
SCE:	<i>Société Calédonien d'Éditions</i>
SLN:	<i>Société Le Nickel</i>
SULA:	<i>Syndicat Libre Unité Action</i>
UC:	<i>Union Calédonienne</i>
UD:	<i>Union Démocratique</i>
UICALO:	<i>Union des Indigènes Calédoniens Amis de la Liberté dans l'Ordre</i>
UJC:	<i>Union de la jeunesse calédonienne</i>
UMNC:	<i>Union Multiraciale de la Nouvelle-Calédonie</i>
UMP:	<i>Union pour un mouvement populaire</i> (formerly RPR)
USTKE:	<i>Union Syndicale des Travailleurs Kanak et des Exploités</i>

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The politics of Kanak culture and identity

Contemporary New Caledonia is dominated by a collective preoccupation with the question of the country's future political relationship to France. This question has a long history that can be traced back to the initial contemplation of New Caledonia's colonisation by France in the first half of the 19th century, leading to France's official '*prise de possession*' of New Caledonia on the 24 September 1853.¹ From the late 1960s, when the Kanak anti-colonial and pro-independence political movement began to emerge, this question, whether acknowledged directly or not, has been central to the articulation of social, cultural and political action in New Caledonia, or 'Kanak'.² Indeed, this question, and past and present processes and dynamics of colonisation, can be seen to have intimately informed the shifting discursive construction, representation and contestation of collective identities in the evolving New Caledonian context.

The collective identities 'formed',³ and perpetually modified and contested, during the official colonial period⁴ and subsequently have been used strategically to justify and sustain certain relations of power, domination and prestige between the different groups that have found themselves obliged to live together in New Caledonia as a result of French colonisation. As affirmed by authors such as Isabelle Merle and Alban Bensa,

¹ See Merle (1995: 32-69). For reasons of economy, I have chosen to use this author-date referencing system for books and journal articles, the full details of which appear in the Bibliography. On the other hand, the full references for articles published in the New Caledonian written press and some New Caledonian magazines appear in the footnotes, with only a list of relevant newspaper and magazine titles and the dates consulted appearing in the Bibliography.

² The country was rebaptised 'Kanak' in the 1980s by the Kanak independence movement. The more frequent use in this thesis of 'New Caledonia' stems from the fact that this remains the country's name under the contemporary legal regime in place, rather than from any political positioning or engagement of the author.

³ This was the term used by Merle in a chapter entitled '*La formation des identités coloniales : De la constitution des groupes sociaux et des liens sociaux*': Merle (1995: 351-398).

⁴ New Caledonia's formal status as a French '*colonie*' ceased in 1946 when it became a '*Territoire d'Outre-Mer*' in French law under the Constitution of the fourth Republic.

the construction of the identities of those local groups centrally implicated in the '*drame colonial*' – the indigenous population and the 'European' (French) free and penal settlers – has been particularly structured by notions and affirmations of cultural difference and distinction, based on a hierarchically ordered continuum running from 'savagery' to 'civilisation'.⁵

Indeed, according to Bensa, the conviction, seemingly shared by all those involved in the New Caledonian 'colonial enterprise', that the country's 'inferior', indigenous 'race' would soon become 'extinct', had given rise to a particular, extreme form of anti-Kanak 'ideology' and racism: '*un racisme d'anéantissement qui n'a jamais envisagé les Kanak que comme des non-êtres.*'⁶ Bensa maintains that this '*racisme d'anéantissement*' largely informed and structured the actions of those in positions of relative dominance in the New Caledonian context in relation to the country's indigenous population, including in relation to the contemporary political struggle for Kanak independence.⁷ Moreover, the politics of Kanak identity affirmation that was engaged by the different components of the Kanak independence movement can be identified as directly responding to this persisting denigration, extending to the denial of Kanak identity, culture, legitimacy and presence in New Caledonia.

The affirmation of Kanak identity as the identity of the country's indigenous people is itself central to the foundation of the legitimacy of the Kanak claims to and active struggle for political independence from France. Moreover, as highlighted by Alaine Chanter, the pro-independence movement's

call for a Kanak and socialist independence had always been [and remains] a call for an independence founded on aspects of Kanak cultural practice, even if there was always [and is still] considerable disagreement

⁵ Merle (1995: 403-404); Bensa (1995a: 121).

⁶ Bensa (1995a: 116).

⁷ Ibid., 117-128.

within the pro-independence movement of what this would mean in practice.⁸

This highlights the fact that what is commonly designated as Kanak 'culture' can be seen to encompass all aspects of Kanak subjectivity and agency, including Kanak modes of socio-political interaction and frames of understanding, acting and being.⁹

Thus, in line with both a Kanak worldview and an ethnographic understanding, there can be no clear distinctions drawn between 'different' spheres of action, such as 'culture' and 'politics', despite the contemporary prevalence of the construction and operation of such distinctions in societies such as New Caledonia in which a 'Western model of society' is broadly dominant. The inseparability of such 'spheres' is also consistent with the perspective articulated by Michel Foucault, whose work emphasises the omniscience of 'the political' and its pervasiveness in all aspects and 'spheres' of (Western) society, conceived by Foucault as a complex and dynamic matrix of relations of power and knowledge.¹⁰ In keeping with all of these perspectives, the active *revendication* from the late 1960s by the Kanak anti-colonial and pro-independence movement of 'Kanak Socialist Independence', 'Kanak culture', 'Kanak identity', 'Kanak lands' and the incorporation of 'Kanak custom' (particularly through its Kanak 'customary' authorities or representatives) into the country's political institutions are all intimately interlinked.¹¹

⁸ Chanter (2002: 34). See also Demmer (2007: 46-47).

⁹ Much of this is designated in short-hand in French as '*la coutume*'. In a 1985 interview, Jean-Marie Tjibaou identified '*la coutume*' as designating broadly '*les manières d'être des Kanaks*' for 'Europeans' who do not understand them. Tjibaou thus affirmed: '*[j]e ne sais pas ce que c'est, la coutume. Je connais des rites précis, qui ont des noms précis. La coutume, [...] c'est le nom quelquefois un peu méprisant que les non-Kanaks donnent à ce que font les Kanaks. C'est pour eux une manière de dire qu'ils ne comprennent rien à cet ensemble de choses. Pour nous, le terme générique de coutume, c'est plutôt le droit, notre manière de vivre, l'ensemble des institutions qui nous régissent.*' Tjibaou (1996: 202).

¹⁰ See the discussion below.

¹¹ A brief overview of the history of these last two elements of the Kanak pro-independence movement's *revendication* is provided in Annex 1. The character and signification of 'Socialism' in the Kanak political movement's *revendication* of 'Kanak Socialist Independence' is also discussed in Annex 1.

However, the strict discursive distinction often constructed between the spheres of ‘culture’ and ‘politics’ is extremely important in the New Caledonian context, by reason of its political implications and frequent strategic mobilisation. As illustrated at various points throughout this thesis, the construction of a distinction between ‘culture’ and ‘politics’, in particular ways by particular actors in particular contexts, can be simultaneously advantageous and disadvantageous as a political strategy. For example, the acknowledgement and accordance of a central position to Kanak culture and identity in New Caledonia can be used as a means to either include and legitimise or to exclude and delegitimise the accordance of a central position to Kanak politics (definable in various ways), depending on whether Kanak culture and identity are conceived as intimately interrelated to or as entirely separate from the domain of politics.

Thesis overview

The principal focus of this thesis is a critical discourse analysis of the contemporaneous coverage in the local written press of three significant ‘cultural’ events which took place in New Caledonia in the thirty-year period between 1975 and 2005.¹² The events considered are the *Mélanésia 2000* festival in 1975 (Chapter One), the inauguration of the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou* (CCT) in 1998 (Chapter Two) and the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in 2003 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of New Caledonia’s ‘*prise de possession*’ on the 24 September, followed by the events organised around the *Mwâ Kâ* to mark that date in 2004 and in 2005, when it was declared New Caledonian ‘Citizenship Day’ by the New Caledonian Government (Chapter Three).

Each of these events articulated and strategically mobilised a particular politics of Kanak culture and identity. *Mélanésia 2000* was chosen because of the cultural and political significance now often attributed to the organisation of this event in 1975, at a time when the Kanak independence movement was still nascent. As discussed below,

¹² The reasons for this focus on the New Caledonian written press are discussed below.

Mélanésie 2000 was the first major initiative to have engaged a politics of Kanak cultural ‘promotion’ geared towards New Caledonia’s Kanak and non-Kanak communities. The inauguration of the CCT twenty-three years later can also be identified as a highly significant cultural and political event in New Caledonia, particularly given the realisation of the project to construct the Centre within the framework and context of the Matignon Accords, but the timing of the inauguration on the day before the official signing of the Noumea Accord. The *Mwâ Kâ* initiative from 2003 to 2005 was selected because of its contentious nature and its inscription in the context of the Noumea Accord during the initial period of that agreement’s implementation.

As discussed in the following Chapters, all or most of the people involved as the key active participants in these three events were Kanak. In all cases, Kanak culture and identity were affirmed in their character as indigenous to the country. Consequently, all of these events were inscribed in specific historical narratives (with particular socio-political implications) constructing continuities and discontinuities between elements of New Caledonia’s past, present and future, but with a particular emphasis on the ‘*fait colonial*’.

Nevertheless, the organisers of all three events can be seen to have articulated a discourse of openness in relation to the country’s established non-Kanak communities. Indeed, all of the events and the discourses of their organisers foregrounded particular constructions of the past, present and future relationships between the Kanak community and the country’s other established ethno-cultural communities. However, numerous tensions persisted in relation to the involvement and inclusion (or otherwise) of the country’s non-Kanak communities projected in or realised through these events. These tensions were rendered particularly acute by the broader social, political and discursive contexts within which the events were realised.

The three events also engaged with a number of tensions within the Kanak community itself. These tensions were associated with the strategic mobilisation of ‘Kanak culture’, ‘Kanak identity’, ‘Kanak unity’ and ‘Kanak legitimacy’ through the events, as a function of the particular perspectives, interests and objectives of the Kanak individuals and groups involved. Furthermore, the realisation of the three events was the product of the involvement and support of a range of Kanak and non-Kanak individuals, groups

and agents (including various arms of national and local government), the motivations and objectives of which appear not to have been uniform, but rather highly varied and often, to some degree, antagonistic. These tensions are thrown into sharp relief when one looks at the ways in which the three events were contemporaneously discursively constructed in the public domain in the New Caledonian written press.

As discussed in further detail below, the approach to ‘discourse’ and to its critical analysis adopted in this thesis draws primarily from Foucault’s perspective, according to which ‘power’ and ‘knowledge’ are not only inextricably interrelated but are also themselves articulated in and through discourse. The particular interest of a critical discourse analysis of the contemporaneous print-media coverage of the events treated in this study arises, in the first instance, from an understanding of these events and their potential or actual implications and effects as discursively constructed and articulated. This interest is potentially augmented by the importance of the local written press, as one prominent element of the media in New Caledonia, in the ‘production’ and ‘dissemination’ of discourse in the local public domain.

According to Garrett and Bell, ‘[t]he media are a particular subject of CDA [Critical Discourse Analysis] analysis because of their manifestly pivotal role as discourse-bearing institutions.’¹³ This affirmation of the ‘manifestly pivotal role’ of the media begs the question as to whether the media actually has such a ‘pivotal role’ in any given society and the precise nature and modalities thereof. However, in the case of the present study, it is perhaps unnecessary to answer this question at the outset to be able to justify a focus on the local print-media coverage of the events selected, by reason of the fact that the different committees or agencies responsible for organising each of the events appear themselves to have attributed particular importance to the local press coverage of the events, and consequently actively and directly engaged with the local media.

¹³ Garrett and Bell (1998: 6).

The attention paid by the events' organisers to the local media can in part be explained by the fact that all of the events were designed to promote social change in New Caledonia, combined with the fact that all of the events could only be experienced directly (as spectators or participants) by a relatively limited number of the country's population.¹⁴ The engagement of the events' organisers with the local media appears to have been especially (if certainly not exclusively) geared towards 'communicating' with the country's non-Kanak communities, given that in most instances the organisers were in more direct 'communication' with at least some parts of the country's Kanak communities. The media, including the local written press, thus seem to have been particularly targeted by the organisers of the events as a means of furthering their aims.

In certain respects, this can be seen to mirror the media engagement of politicians (and, indeed, of other actors in the public domain). As noted by Fairclough, '[m]ediatized politics is an important part of contemporary politics',¹⁵ and the same can be said to be true of the politics of Kanak culture and identity in contemporary New Caledonia. Moreover, as in the case of politicians and other prominent public figures, the key organisers of the 'cultural' events considered in this thesis can be seen to have become 'accessed voices' in the local media.¹⁶ As explained by Roger Fowler, '[a]ccess is a reciprocal relationship', through which certain people become the privileged interlocutors of the press as sources of news by reason of their established authority, their organised nature and their substantial resources.¹⁷ The local print-media coverage of the events considered in this thesis consequently contains a large number of interviews with and quotations from these key organisers, and can often be seen to rely

¹⁴ Missotte partially highlighted this when he maintained that one of the reasons for the value of an analysis of the contemporaneous local print-media coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* was the fact that this coverage constituted: '*les seuls échos qui sont parvenus à beaucoup de Calédoniens-Européens qui ne sont pas venus à Mélanésie 2000.*' Missotte (1985: 512).

¹⁵ Fairclough (1998: 147).

¹⁶ This term was coined by J Hartley: Fowler (1991: 22).

¹⁷ Fowler (1991: 22). Fowler explains further: 'the media conventionally expect and receive the right of access to the statements of these individuals, because the individuals have roles in the public domain; and reciprocally these people receive access to the columns of the papers when they wish to air their views': *ibid.*

heavily on information supplied directly by them. The contemporaneous print-media coverage of these events consequently constitutes an important ‘textual archive’,¹⁸ the critical analysis of which can provide some insight into the continuities and discontinuities in the discursive strategies and processes at play in the New Caledonian public sphere between 1975 and 2005 in relation to the politics of Kanak culture and identity.

A critical discourse analysis of the local print-media coverage of the politics of Kanak culture and identity mobilised in or in relation to these events also has particular interest by reason of the largely ‘European’-dominated character of the local print media at the respective times of the events and the predominance throughout the period between 1975 and 2005 of newspapers with a broadly conservative, anti-independence orientation.¹⁹ During their organisation and realisation, all three events were discursively situated by their organisers as having some distance from the domain of local ‘politics’. However, the events can still all be seen to have affirmed the persisting political centrality of Kanak (indigenous) culture, identity, agency and legitimacy in New Caledonia, including through the affirmation of Kanak openness, inclusion and ‘*accueil*’ in relation to the country’s non-indigenous inhabitants. Given the predominantly ‘non-Kanak’ character and anti-independence orientation of the local written press, an analysis of its contemporaneous coverage of these predominantly Kanak-organised and -centred ‘cultural’ events provides a fruitful means of considering some of the issues associated with the politics of Kanak (indigenous) culture and identity in New Caledonia during the contemporary period in which the country’s decolonisation has been at the forefront of the local political agenda.

Moreover, a consideration and comparison of such tensions and issues through a critical analysis of the local print-media coverage of these events in 1975, 1998 and 2003–2005,

¹⁸ This phrase, which can be seen to echo Foucault’s approach to the notion of ‘archive’, is drawn from Kylie Message’s discussion of the international print-media coverage of the CCT’s 1998 inauguration: Message (2006: 22).

¹⁹ This is discussed further below.

and the associated politics of Kanak culture and identity within a pluri-cultural society which is divided over the question of decolonisation, is particularly pertinent in the contemporary New Caledonian context as the 1998 Noumea Accord enters its final phase. This transitional political agreement can be seen to elaborate and engage its own politics of Kanak culture and identity, subject to inherent tensions which only find a temporary and uneasy resolution and equilibrium in the Accord.

Tensions in the Noumea Accord: ‘Kanak identity’ and local ‘citizenship’

The Noumea Accord was concluded in 1998 by the French State, the pro-independence Kanak coalition, the *Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste* (FLNKS), and the then dominant anti-independence party, the *Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République* (RPCR), to avoid the referendum on self-determination programmed for 1998 by an earlier political agreement between the same signatories, the 1988 Matignon Accords. This earlier agreement was concluded to restore civil peace in New Caledonia after the serious conflict and violence between pro- and anti-independence militants in the 1980s, commonly referred to euphemistically as ‘*les événements*’. As stated in October 1988 by then French Prime Minister, Michel Rocard, who oversaw the negotiation and conclusion of the Matignon Accords: ‘[l]’*affrontement de deux convictions antagonistes a failli déboucher, jusqu’à une date récente, sur une situation voisine de la guerre civile.*’²⁰ Central to the Matignon Accords agreement was the deferral of the question of independence for a period of ten years, at which time it was to be definitively determined by a restricted, local-electorate referendum. During the intervening period, a program of political, economic, social and cultural ‘*rééquilibrage*’ in favour of the systematically disadvantaged and marginalised Kanak population was

²⁰ Rocard (1998).

to be engaged by the three signatories acting within the country's institutional structure as defined by the Matignon Accords.

However, it became increasingly apparent during this period that the 'no' vote would carry the 1998 referendum on independence by reason of the particular electoral balance between pro- and anti-independence supporters (which had come to broadly correlate to the demographic balance between the country's ethno-cultural communities²¹ – the majority of the Kanak population being in favour of independence and the majority of the country's settler and immigrant population being opposed to independence). To avoid this referendum, felt to pose a threat to peace and stability in the country, political negotiations were engaged with a view to concluding a new 'consensual agreement' on New Caledonia's future.

The resulting 1998 Noumea Accord²² (which was subsequently approved by referendum and enacted in French law in the French Constitution itself²³ and in the *Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*²⁴) can be seen to

²¹ According to the 1996 official census, the 'Melanesian' population constituted 44.1% of the total population, the 'European' population 34.1%, the Wallisian and Futunan population 9%, the Tahitian population 2.6%, the Indonesian population 2.5%, the Vietnamese population 1.4%, the Ni-Vanuatu population 1.1%, and 3.9% of the population were classified as 'other' or 'other Asian': Ahmed-Michaux and Roos (1997: 21). The question relating to ethno-cultural identity in the most recent census, conducted in 2009, gave respondents more options to choose from, including the possibility of identifying with more than one group. According to the 2009 census, 40.3% identified themselves as belonging to the Kanak community, 29.2% to the 'European' community, 8.7% to the Wallisian and Futunan community, 5% to the 'calédonienne' community, 2.0% to the Tahitian community, 1.6% to the Indonesian community, 1.0% to the Vietnamese community, 0.9% to the Ni-Vanuatu community and 1.8% fell within the 'other' or 'other Asian' categories. 8.3% of respondents identified themselves as belonging to more than one community. 1.2% of respondents did not answer this question. Rivoilan and Broustet (2011: 3).

²² Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, n° 121, 27 May 1998, 8039, <<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000555817&dateTexte=>> ('Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998').

²³ See 'Titre XIII – Dispositions transitoires relatives à la Nouvelle-Calédonie', *La Constitution du 4 Octobre 1985*, consolidated version as at 1 December 2009, <<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006071194>> ('*La Constitution du 4 Octobre 1985*'). This provision gives Constitutional force and protection to the Noumea Accord agreement.

²⁴ *Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, n° 68, 21 March 1999, 4197; consolidated version as at 2 November 2011, <<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do;jsessionid=DF96DFC0BADCAE29EFCBE79A6370A31C>

build on, but also to significantly extend and go beyond the 1988 agreement. Like its predecessor, the Noumea Accord defines the contemporary institutional structure of New Caledonia. However, in addition to continuing and strengthening the process of *rééquilibrage* begun in 1988, the Noumea Accord elaborates a program for the progressive, irreversible transfer of responsibility for different areas of government from the French State to the New Caledonian Congress and Government. At the end of this program, only the prerogative powers – those relating to Justice, Public Order, Defence, Currency and Foreign Affairs²⁵ – are to remain with the French State. During the fourth, five-year term of the New Caledonian Congress (which will commence in 2014), one or possibly more restricted local-electorate referendums are programmed to be held on the question of:

*le transfert à la Nouvelle-Calédonie des compétences régaliennes,
l'accès à un statut international de pleine responsabilité et
l'organisation de la citoyenneté en nationalité.*²⁶

While the term '*indépendance*' is never used in the text of the agreement, the Accord refers to the potential outcome of these referendums as '*une complète émancipation*',²⁷ which '*équivaldrait à la pleine souveraineté de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.*'²⁸ Conversely, if these referendums are answered in the negative, the Accord provides that the political organisation of New Caledonia existing at that time will remain in place, potentially pending the conclusion of a new negotiated political agreement (which cannot, however, reverse the transfers already affected).

.tpdjo11v_2?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000393606&dateTexte=20111102> ('*Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*').

²⁵ Note that the Foreign Affairs power is 'shared', particularly in relation to the Pacific region, during the period of the Accord.

²⁶ *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*, 'Document d'orientation', point 5.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 'Préambule', point 5.

Foundational history as strategy and practice

The Noumea Accord's Preamble is central to the agreement, in that it elaborates a particular historical narrative which works to establish the legitimacy of the Noumea Accord itself and of the three main constituencies (the French State, the Kanak people and the established New Caledonian settler and immigrant populations) represented, or purported to be represented, by its three signatories (the French State, the FLNKS and the RPCR). Considerable social and political significance has been attributed to the express acknowledgement in the Preamble of the metaphorical '*ombres*' as well as the '*lumières*' of the colonial period, an acknowledgement which has often been identified as a crucial component of the contemporary process of inter-group reconciliation in New Caledonia, and consequently as necessary for the future peace and prosperity of the country and the realisation of the '*destin commun*', to be shared by all of the country's established legitimate inhabitants, that is projected in the Noumea Accord.

The Preamble thus 'establishes' or 'recognises' the historical basis of the posited legitimacy of the presence and rights of the Kanak, as the country's indigenous people, and the other communities now permanently installed in New Caledonia.²⁹ It also rationalises France's '*prise de possession*' of New Caledonia,³⁰ and legitimates the involvement – including into the future – of the French State in relation to the country. The foundational historical narrative elaborated in the Noumea Accord's Preamble is thus closely linked to questions of political legitimacy and collective identity in contemporary New Caledonia. In conjunction with the program of concrete measures designed to implement a social, political and economic *rééquilibrage* in favour of the Kanak population, the historical narrative constructed by the Noumea Accord's Preamble provides the foundation on which the Accord can then go on to elaborate its

²⁹ In this connection, the Preamble affirms that: '[I]es communautés qui vivent sur le territoire ont acquis par leur participation à l'édification de la Nouvelle-Calédonie une légitimité à y vivre et à continuer de contribuer à son développement.' Ibid., 'Préambule', point 4.

³⁰ This rationalisation takes the form of the contextualisation of France's '*prise de possession*' of New Caledonia within a broader '*mouvement historique*' of colonisation and in relation to the international legal norms of the time. For a critique of this aspect of the Noumea Accord's Preamble, see Muckle (2007); Berman (2007).

socio-political project for the construction of a peaceful '*destin commun*' to be shared by all of the country's ethno-cultural communities.

However, as seen above, the Noumea Accord does not definitively determine the country's future politico-juridical status and the nature of its future relationship to France. The Noumea Accord is consequently designed to allow for highly divergent interpretations in relation to those very questions. As a result, the different groups that claim to adhere to the Noumea Accord are able to maintain several, often seemingly diametrically opposed narratives constructing the country's past, present and future relationship to France.

Ambiguous 'sovereignty'

A central concept in the Noumea Accord agreement is that of 'sovereignty'. The period covered by the Accord is described in the agreement as one in which 'sovereignty' over New Caledonia is to be 'shared'. For instance, the Preamble characterises this period as being:

*marquée par la pleine reconnaissance de l'identité kanak, préalable à la refondation d'un contrat social entre toutes les communautés qui vivent en Nouvelle-Calédonie, et par un partage de souveraineté avec la France, sur la voie de la pleine souveraineté.*³¹

Despite this reference to '*la voie de la pleine souveraineté*' and the characterisations elsewhere in the Preamble of the Accord as a process of '*décolonisation*'³² and '*émancipation*',³³ as seen above the ultimate outcome of the Noumea Accord is left open. Moreover, these passages of the Preamble and the concept of 'sovereignty' in this

³¹ *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*, 'Préambule', point 4. '*La souveraineté partagée*' is identified elsewhere in the Preamble as the '*partage des compétences entre l'Etat et la Nouvelle-Calédonie*', through the progressive and irreversible transfer of those '*compétences*': *ibid.*, 'Préambule', point 5.

³² *Ibid.*, 'Préambule', point 4.

³³ *Ibid.*, 'Préambule', point 5.

context are given highly divergent interpretations by local pro- and anti-independence politicians, including the local signatories to the Noumea Accord.

The Preamble refers to ‘sovereignty’ in another key passage which runs as follows:

*[L]a colonisation a porté atteinte à la dignité du peuple kanak qu'elle a privé de son identité. Des hommes et des femmes ont perdu dans cette confrontation leur vie ou leurs raisons de vivre. De grandes souffrances en sont résultées. Il convient de faire mémoire de ces moments difficiles, de reconnaître les fautes, de restituer au peuple kanak son identité confisquée, ce qui équivaut pour lui à une reconnaissance de sa souveraineté, préalable à la fondation d'une nouvelle souveraineté, partagée dans un destin commun.*³⁴

The first of the two references to ‘sovereignty’ in this passage is unique in the context of the text of the Noumea Accord in that it is explicitly identified as the perspective of one of the constituencies or groups represented by one of the agreement’s signatories – that is, the Kanak people, as represented by the FLNKS.³⁵ The recognition of the wrongs of colonisation and the ‘restitution’ to the Kanak people of its ‘confiscated identity’ are here identified as equating to the recognition of *the Kanak people’s* ‘sovereignty’, *from the perspective of that people*.

³⁴ Ibid., ‘Préambule’, point 3. This passage illustrates the kind of ‘frank acknowledgement’ of the past and continuing negative impacts of colonisation on the country’s indigenous people contained in the historical narrative of the Preamble. Indeed, Bensa’s posited ‘*racisme d’anéantissement*’ can itself be seen to be directly highlighted and acknowledged in this passage’s recognition that colonisation deprived the Kanak people of its identity.

³⁵ Note that the meaning of the second reference to ‘sovereignty’, which projects and affirms the future foundation of ‘*une nouvelle souveraineté, partagée dans un destin commun*’ to be achieved through the Noumea Accord process is ambiguous, in keeping with the broader ambiguity structured into the agreement in relation to the political status of the country and its relationship to France at the end of the period covered by the Accord. For, as discussed above, the concept of ‘*la souveraineté partagée*’ refers elsewhere in the Preamble to the sovereignty of New Caledonia as being shared by the French State and New Caledonia’s political institutions. On the other hand, the concept of ‘*un destin commun*’ is used elsewhere in the Preamble to refer to the shared future of the country’s (Kanak and non-Kanak) legitimate established inhabitants, which might tend to suggest that the ‘*nouvelle souveraineté, partagée dans un destin commun*’ to be founded is actually a ‘shared sovereignty’ held by those recognised local inhabitants, outside the French State and the purview of French sovereignty.

This passage indicates a significant disjuncture between the meanings attributed by the different signatories to the acknowledgement of the wrongs of colonisation and the so-called 'restitution' of 'Kanak identity' brought about through the Noumea Accord. The wording of this passage implies that the Noumea Accord's other signatories do not view the recognition of the wrongs of colonisation and the 'restitution' of 'Kanak identity' to the Kanak people as the recognition of the 'sovereignty' of that people. Moreover, Kanak 'sovereignty' is not expressly recognised at any other point in the text of the Accord, with the result that this limited form of recognition is, on one reading of the agreement, rendered entirely 'symbolic' and devoid of concrete political consequences.

This reading can be contrasted to the Kanak perspective constructed and 'acknowledged' in this passage, which can be seen to relate particularly to the political implications for any process of 'decolonisation' of '*Kanak identity*' as *indigenous*. From this perspective, the recognition and restitution of Kanak indigeneity signifies the recognition and restitution of the concrete rights stemming from the Kanak people's status as the country's indigenous people, including notably its right to 'sovereignty'. Moreover, this perspective is not only informed by principles and norms currently affirmed in international law, but can also be seen to intersect with particular Kanak conceptions of 'sovereignty'. Indeed, the Kanak 'customary' mode or process of *accueil* (both at the 'traditional', local level and transposed to the 'national' level of New Caledonia as a whole) can in certain respects be seen to intersect with the Western concept of 'sovereignty', designating the ultimate legitimate socio-political authority over a specific territory.

Hamid Mokaddem discusses what can be considered to be the 'traditional' Kanak conception and practice of 'sovereignty', which he situates as existing meaningfully in the local context of the so-called '*chefferie*'.³⁶ As highlighted by authors such as Jean

³⁶ As indicated by Mokaddem himself, the terms '*chefferie*' and '*clan*' '*n'existent pas dans le vocabulaire des langues kanak. Ils traduisent approximativement les structures politiques kanak.*' Mokaddem (2009: 110). It should be noted in this regard that, as highlighted by Christine Demmer, from the colonial period, which marked the imposition of a new social, territorial and politico-juridical order for many Kanak people and communities, the newly created Kanak villages or '*tribus*' were also referred to in '*le français*

Guiart and Patrice Godin, despite its widespread use, the term ‘chefferie’ is highly inadequate as an ethnographic description of Kanak society.³⁷ Guiart maintains that:

*on ne retrouve, dans les faits, d'autocratie nulle part, sinon sous la plume des observateurs occidentaux qui découvrent dans le Pacifique sud ce qu'ils étaient venus y chercher [...].*³⁸

Drawing on the work of these and other authors,³⁹ Mokaddem contends that, in the context of the ‘traditional’ ‘chefferie’:

*[L]e point souverain est le point d'équilibre des pouvoirs et des interdépendances des clans qui conservent, sans le montrer, les prérogatives des décisions. La chefferie est l'équilibre de l'ensemble des clans et sous-clans. [...] Les échanges, les communications, et les concertations passent par ce point souverain.*⁴⁰

As highlighted by Mokaddem, the differentiated conceptions of ‘sovereignty’ and ‘independence’ articulated in an interview in 1985 by the Kanak pro-independence leader, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, reflect this ‘traditional’ Kanak understanding of these concepts.⁴¹ Tjibaou maintained that:

*[c]’est la souveraineté qui nous donne le droit et le pouvoir de négocier les interdépendances. Pour un petit pays comme le nôtre, l’indépendance, c’est de bien calculer les interdépendances.*⁴²

However, it is important to recognise that Mokaddem’s description of the location of ‘sovereignty’ in ‘traditional’ Kanak society relates to an established, stabilised socio-political group living in a particular territory. The process of reaching this stabilised

local’ as ‘« chefferies administratives » par rapport à un système politique antérieur, où le mode de désignation du chef[...] répondait à une logique strictement endogène.’ Demmer (2002: 195).

³⁷ Guiart (1985: 34-35). See also Godin (1990).

³⁸ Guiart (1985: 34-35).

³⁹ In particular, Alban Bensa, Michel Naepels and Yves-Béalo Gony. Mokaddem (2009: 98).

⁴⁰ Mokaddem (2009: 99).

⁴¹ Ibid., 103-104.

⁴² Tjibaou (1996: 179).

socio-political structure is the ‘customary’ *accueil* of a foreign group by the first occupants of the territory, commonly referred to as the ‘*maîtres de la terre*’. As observed by Michel Naepels (writing specifically in relation to the Houaïlou region), the *accueil* by the *maîtres de la terre* of an ‘*étranger accueilli*’ allows for their permanent installation in a shared place of residence through the definition of new socio-political relations – a new equilibrium or ‘*point souverain*’ – between the individuals and groups concerned.⁴³

This Kanak conceptualisation and understanding of the mode and dynamics of *accueil* within specific, local socio-political contexts and shared places of residence can be transposed to New Caledonia as a whole, conceived in this logic as a single place of residence in relation to which the ‘*maîtres de la terre*’ are the Kanak people collectively, as the country’s first occupants or indigenous people. This perspective might be seen to correlate to or inform the statement in the Noumea Accord’s Preamble that the recognition and restitution of ‘Kanak identity’ (conceived as Kanak indigeneity) equates to the recognition from the Kanak perspective of Kanak ‘sovereignty’ (the Kanak people being conceived as the country’s metaphorical *maîtres de la terre*). Similarly, the Preamble’s identification of this recognition and restitution of ‘Kanak identity’ as the necessary precondition for the ‘*fondation d’une nouvelle souveraineté, partagée dans un destin commun*’, might be seen to correlate to the realisation of inter-group reconciliation and the establishment of a cohesive and peaceful socio-political order and equilibrium in New Caledonia through the exercise of Kanak ‘sovereignty’ in their *accueil* of the country’s more recent arrivals, following this ‘customary’ mode. On this reading, the type of ‘shared sovereignty’ described by Mokaddem and Naepels, founded on the definition and respect of the differentiated but coexisting legitimacies, rights and roles of the country’s indigenous people and its non-indigenous communities, would be instituted.⁴⁴

⁴³ Naepels (1998: 204, 241).

⁴⁴ On the Kanak conceptualisation of differentiated but coexisting legitimacies and rights, see *ibid.*, 242, and the discussion in Annex 1.

Equal local ‘citizenship’ conditioned by ‘Kanak identity’ – a key tension in the Noumea Accord

A key tension can be identified in the Noumea Accord. On the one hand, as seen above, the Accord clearly affirms the recognition and restitution of ‘Kanak identity’ as the very basis on which an inclusive, pluri-ethnic, liberal democratic society and ‘common destiny’ are to be built.⁴⁵ This translates in the Accord to certain concrete measures valorising and institutionally incorporating Kanak ‘culture’, Kanak ‘custom’ (and ‘customary’ authorities) and particular Kanak rights (including land rights) stemming from their position as the country’s indigenous people.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the Accord also provides for the creation of New Caledonian ‘citizenship’, on the basis of Western liberal democratic principles but within the specific overarching framework established by the Accord. Accompanying the creation of local ‘citizenship’, the Noumea Accord provides for the creation of certain ‘*signes identitaires du pays*’ – its name, flag, anthem, motto and bank note designs – which ‘*devront être recherchés en commun pour exprimer l’identité kanak et le futur partagé entre tous.*’⁴⁷ The category of local ‘citizenship’ is also linked to restrictions on certain local voting rights (including the right to vote in the referendums on independence) and protections for local employment, all of which are fundamental to the socio-political project elaborated by the Noumea Accord and the construction of the projected future ‘*destin commun*’, to be shared by all of the country’s ‘citizens’.⁴⁸ During the Noumea Accord process, New Caledonian ‘citizenship’ and ‘*signes identitaires*’ exist alongside French citizenship and

⁴⁵ *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*, ‘Préambule’, point 3.

⁴⁶ See particularly *ibid.*, ‘Document d’orientation’, point 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, ‘Document d’orientation’, point 1.5.

⁴⁸ Alain Christnacht thus affirmed in 2003 that: ‘[c]itoyenneté, droit au travail, droit de vote. Il y a une cohérence. Il faut le comprendre, le pratiquer, le mettre en œuvre. Ce n’est plus l’acceptation d’une cohabitation pacifique. C’est l’organisation d’un destin commun [...]’ Alain Christnacht, ‘L’avenir de l’Accord de Nouméa’, *Les Infos*, no. 4, 29/08/2003, 4. These three interlinking elements of the Noumea Accord can be viewed as among the most important concrete means through which the Noumea Accord recognises and gives effect to the legitimacy and rights posited to be shared by the Kanak people and the country’s other long-term residents (who qualify as local ‘citizens’), all of whom are posited to be equally committed to the future development of the country and the construction of the so-called ‘common destiny’.

the French national symbols. However, if the country's 'citizens' were to opt for 'full emancipation' at the end of the Noumea Accord process, local 'citizenship' would be converted into local 'nationality' and the country's '*signes identitaires*' would entirely replace those of French New Caledonia.⁴⁹

This new category of local 'citizenship' is, in the terms of the Accord, necessarily conditioned by the recognition and restitution of 'Kanak identity', which is consequently placed at the centre of the Noumea Accord process. The question of the relative place to be accorded to local non-Kanak identities and/or a possible future identity shared by Kanak and non-Kanak 'citizens' alike is largely left open by the Accord, which tends rather to mobilise the (strategically open-ended) concept of the '*destin commun*', projected vaguely into the country's future. Thus, while the first section of the Accord's '*Document d'orientation*' is devoted to '*L'identité kanak*', the perspective opened by the Noumea Accord leaves the content and meaning of local identity in the future undefined. This is apparent in another key passage of the Accord's Preamble, which affirms that:

*[L]e passé a été le temps de la colonisation. Le présent est le temps du partage, par le rééquilibrage. L'avenir doit être le temps de l'identité, dans un destin commun.*⁵⁰

In contrast, in a public lecture in August 2003 on '*l'avenir de l'Accord de Nouméa*', Alain Christnacht, who was instrumental in the elaboration and finalisation of the Accord, affirmed that:

*il faut fonder le peuple calédonien par la citoyenneté. Il y a un peuple Kanak. Il a une légitimité et une reconnaissance, il y a un peuple calédonien dont il fait partie. [...] Le peuple calédonien ; c'est maintenant la question-clé.*⁵¹

⁴⁹ Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998, 'Préambule', point 5.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 'Préambule', point 4.

⁵¹ Alain Christnacht, 'L'avenir de l'Accord de Nouméa', *Les Infos*, no. 4, 29/08/2003, 4.

However, this perspective is not shared by all individuals and groups in New Caledonia, and the signification and implications of the uneasy ‘reconciliation’ and temporary equilibrium established by the Noumea Accord between the centrality of ‘Kanak identity’ and the construction of equal local ‘citizenship’ and a ‘common destiny’ for all are hotly contested.

As seen in Chapter Three, this tension, inherent in the terms of the Noumea Accord, and the associated contestation in the local public domain is echoed in the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative from 2003 (five years into the Noumea Accord process) and its coverage in the local written press. This tension and contestation are also significant for the consideration of the 1998 inauguration of the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou* and its coverage in the local press in Chapter Two, particularly given that the inauguration took place on the day before the Noumea Accord was officially signed. Although the 1975 festival, *Mélanésie 2000*, took place well before the ‘advent’ of the Noumea Accord, similar tensions and contestation arising from the affirmation of ‘Kanak identity’ and Kanak people collectively as having a particular, central position and legitimacy in New Caledonia by reason of their indigenous status can be seen to have marked this event and its coverage in the local written press. Indeed, as seen in Chapter One, the vision for the country’s future incorporating Kanak and non-Kanak communities in a radically reconfigured symbolic and material socio-political order articulated through the 1975 festival (most notably in its ‘*jeu scénique*’) can, in certain significant respects, be likened to the socio-political project and process articulated by the 1998 Noumea Accord itself.

More generally, the tension and contestation identified above specifically in relation to the Noumea Accord can be seen to echo some of the persisting tensions and contestations which have been central to local politics since the emergence of the Kanak independence movement from the late 1960s, including in the domain of the ‘promotion’ of Kanak culture and identity which emerged during the same period.

The emergence of Kanak cultural ‘promotion’ as a significant arena of political engagement

As noted above, the selection of *Mélanésie 2000* as the first ‘cultural’ event treated in this thesis was partly made in reference to the fact that this large-scale, State-sponsored but primarily Kanak-organised cultural festival can be identified as the first major initiative to have engaged a politics of Kanak cultural ‘promotion’ geared towards the country’s Kanak and non-Kanak communities. Following Bensa’s analysis, *Mélanésie 2000* can thus be seen to represent one of the first steps towards the constitution of ‘Kanak culture’ as a ‘distinct’ field of contemporary political action, pursued for very different (and in some instances and respects antithetical) purposes by pro-independence Kanak militants and by the French State.⁵² Bensa refers to this process as the ‘*avènement de la « culture kanak »*’,⁵³ related to the institution of ‘*le monde kanak en tant que réalité culturelle aussi singulière qu’objectivable*.’⁵⁴

Bensa maintains that the acknowledgement by the State of the existence of ‘Kanak culture’ was the expression of a new ‘*rapport de forces quand les Kanaks relèvent la tête*’, with the emergence of the Kanak anti-colonial movement from the late 1960s.⁵⁵ However, according to Bensa, in engaging in a politics of Kanak cultural ‘promotion’ in the 1970s and subsequently, the French authorities sought to

*dissocier l’argument politique de fond (l’exigence de décolonisation, avec ou sans « culture ») de sa variante jugée moins dangereuse (la reconnaissance d’une culture kanak).*⁵⁶

⁵² Bensa (2002: 186-189).

⁵³ Ibid., 186.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 187.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 186.

⁵⁶ Ibid. There is some ambiguity in Bensa’s characterisation of the ‘*argument politique de fond*’ as the Kanak ‘*exigence de décolonisation, avec ou sans « culture »*’ – as discussed previously, the Kanak ‘political’ anti-colonial and pro-independence *revendication* and movement has never been dissociated (or dissociable) from Kanak ‘culture’ and its *revendication*.

Nevertheless, in terms of *Mélanésie 2000*, particular significance is often attributed to the 1975 festival today as having purportedly signalled and even constituted ‘the beginning’ of the Kanak recognition and *revendication* of a unique and positive cultural identity, itself now often identified as a crucial step allowing for the adoption of the political *revendication* of independence by ‘the Kanak people’.⁵⁷

It is also important to highlight in this connection that there is a significant difference in the relative role and level of involvement of the French State in comparison to the New Caledonian authorities in the different ‘cultural’ events considered in this thesis. On the one hand, the French State played a very important role in enabling the realisation of both *Mélanésie 2000* and the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou*. The State was also conceived by the local Kanak organising committee and agency respectively responsible for these two initiatives as one of their primary interlocutors in terms of the politics of Kanak culture and identity being engaged. On the other hand, various elements of the local authorities and institutional structures constituted the key actors and interlocutors in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative, organised in the Noumea Accord context.⁵⁸ Attention is thus directed in each Chapter to the tensions between the different interests and motivations of the various actors involved in or, conversely, critical of the events, as identifiable through the discourses articulated in the local written press.⁵⁹

The issues related to the so-called ‘*avènement de la « culture kanak »*’ and the associated ‘definitions’ or delimitations of ‘Kanak culture’ and ‘Kanak identity’⁶⁰ are intimately interlinked to questions of cultural ‘authenticity’. These questions are themselves often framed by particular historical narratives constructing continuities and

⁵⁷ However, as discussed in Chapter One, this view is not shared by certain commentators or by a number of the Kanak individuals who were opposed to the festival project in 1975.

⁵⁸ This was also the case for the organisation of the eighth Festival of Pacific Arts hosted by New Caledonia in 2000, discussed in Chapter Two and Annex 9.

⁵⁹ Note that, as discussed below, by reason of the inter-textual and inter-discursive nature of the print-media texts and discourses analysed in this study, my analysis necessarily includes references to a number of discursive representations and constructions of these events in various other (primarily written) sources.

⁶⁰ Bensa further highlights and discusses some of these issues in Bensa (2002: 188-189).

discontinuities between the past, the present and the future. There is considerable contestation within the broader Kanak community in relation to the 'legitimacy' of the different 'cultural' programs and initiatives which have been engaged and realised in New Caledonia with a particular Kanak focus, including the legitimacy of the associated representations of Kanak 'culture', 'identity', 'custom' or 'tradition', and 'people'. These issues and questions are considered in relation to each of the events treated in this thesis through the analysis of the associated discourses articulated in the local written press.

As indicated above, another interrelated tension is that between, on the one hand, the construction, affirmation and strategic mobilisation of Kanak 'cultural' unity (and attendant 'political' unity) and, on the other, the recognition and accommodation of the realities of Kanak 'cultural' difference, diversity and division. All of the events considered in this thesis were articulated in a pan-Kanak register. Consequently, the concrete and symbolic means used in the context of each event to construct Kanak unity and a singular or shared Kanak identity are also discussed, along with their political implications, in the analysis of the print-media coverage of these events.

The events considered can also all be seen to have had significant implications for the question of 'sovereignty' in New Caledonia, arising from particular understandings of the political implications of the affirmation of the Kanak people as the country's colonised, indigenous people, and from the projection of Kanak 'sovereignty' through the performance of Kanak 'customary' *accueil*. For, as indicated above, each of the 'cultural' events studied was strategically inscribed in inherently political discourses of Kanak indigeneity, centrality and legitimacy, as well as discourses of Kanak openness, inclusion and *accueil* in relation to the country's more recently established arrivals, and in broader discursive narratives situating the events in relation to the country's past, present and future. The different ways in which the relevant aspects of each event and the associated discourses were constructed in the contemporaneous local written press coverage thus constitutes a central focus of this thesis.

Critical discourse analysis

As highlighted by Dominique Maingueneau, the discipline (or rather disciplines) of ‘discourse analysis’ can be seen to have emerged from developments in three different academic enterprises which took place in various parts of the globe around the 1960s: the ethnography of communication, textual linguistics and the ‘French school’ of discourse analysis.⁶¹ My approach draws particularly from the perspective articulated by Michel Foucault, whose work has been highly influential on French discourse analysis⁶² and on the social sciences more broadly. My approach also draws from those developed by several authors working from the starting point of textual linguistics who have focused particularly on media and print-media discourse, including the ‘critical linguist’ Roger Fowler and the ‘critical discourse analyst’ Norman Fairclough. Certain aspects of Foucault’s thought have also been incorporated by Fairclough into his approach to ‘critical discourse analysis’, in which he attempts a selective synthesis of various approaches to discourse analysis.⁶³

Foucault – power, knowledge, discourse

The question of power and its interconnection to knowledge and discourse is a key focus of Foucault’s work.⁶⁴ Thus, in *Surveiller et punir*, Foucault talks of a ‘*microphysique du pouvoir*’, reflecting his conceptualisation of ‘power’ in terms of continually shifting relations and matrices of highly localised opposing forces and strategic positions permeating any given society.⁶⁵ Foucault consequently maintains:

⁶¹ Maingueneau (1998).

⁶² Williams (1999).

⁶³ Glyn Williams advocates greater consideration and understanding of the French school of discourse analysis and its roots in post-structuralism by those working from the starting point of linguistics. He highlights the work of Fairclough as unique in attempting to bridge the gap between these approaches, but is critical of certain aspects of Fairclough’s attempted synthesis. See Williams (1999: 3).

⁶⁴ Williams (1999: 94).

⁶⁵ Foucault (1975: 35).

*l'étude de cette microphysique suppose que le pouvoir qui s'y exerce ne soit pas conçu comme une propriété, mais comme une stratégie, que ses effets de domination ne soient pas attribués à une « appropriation », mais à des dispositions, à des manœuvres, à des tactiques, à des techniques, à des fonctionnements ; qu'on déchiffre en lui plutôt un réseau de relations toujours tendues, toujours en activité plutôt qu'un privilège qu'on pourrait détenir [...].*⁶⁶

As thus conceived by Foucault, power, or rather relations of power, '*descendent loin dans l'épaisseur de la société*'.⁶⁷ Indeed, power is identified by Foucault in the first volume of *Histoire de la sexualité* as '*omniprésent*',⁶⁸ and as '*le nom qu'on prête à une situation stratégique complexe dans une société donnée*'.⁶⁹ Foucault justifies his conceptualisation of power by the posited fact that:

*c'est un des traits fondamentaux des sociétés occidentales que les rapports de force qui longtemps avaient trouvé dans la guerre, dans toutes les formes de guerre, leur expression principale se sont petit à petit investis dans l'ordre du pouvoir politique.*⁷⁰

Foucault also posits that power and knowledge are inextricably interlinked. He thus affirms:

*[i]l faut [...] admettre que le pouvoir produit du savoir (et pas simplement en le favorisant parce qu'il le sert ou en l'appliquant parce qu'il est utile) ; que pouvoir et savoir s'impliquent directement l'un l'autre ; qu'il n'y a pas de relation de pouvoir sans constitution corrélatrice d'un champ de savoir, ni de savoir qui ne suppose et ne constitue en même temps des relations de pouvoir.*⁷¹

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Foucault (1976: 122).

⁶⁹ Ibid., 123.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 135.

⁷¹ Foucault (1975: 36).

An illustration of this has already been touched upon in this Introduction – the constitution and development through time of the Kanak ‘race’ and ‘Kanak culture’ as (interrelating) fields of knowledge and their connection to relations of power in colonial New Caledonia and subsequently.⁷²

As noted previously, discourse is also interlinked with power and knowledge in Foucault’s perspective. Thus, he maintains that what is said about any particular subject⁷³ cannot be analysed as the simple surface projection of the ‘*mécanismes de pouvoir*’ at work.⁷⁴ Rather, it is in discourse itself that ‘*pouvoir et savoir viennent s’articuler*.’⁷⁵ Foucault continues:

[e]t pour cette raison même, il faut concevoir le discours comme une série de segments discontinus, dont la fonction tactique n’est ni uniforme ni stable. Plus précisément, il ne faut pas imaginer un monde du discours partagé entre le discours reçu et le discours exclu ou entre le discours dominant et celui qui est dominé ; mais comme une multiplicité d’éléments discursifs qui peuvent jouer dans des stratégies diverses. C’est cette distribution qu’il faut restituer, avec ce qu’elle comporte de choses dites et de choses cachées, d’énonciations requises et interdites ; avec ce qu’elle suppose de variantes et d’effets différents selon celui qui parle, sa position de pouvoir, le contexte institutionnel où il se trouve

⁷² The comments made by Foucault in relation to the history of sexuality in Western Europe seem highly applicable to this, nevertheless very different, New Caledonian history: ‘[s]i la sexualité s’est constituée comme domaine à connaître, c’est à partir de relations de pouvoir qui l’ont instituée comme objet possible ; et en retour si le pouvoir a pu la prendre pour cible, c’est parce que des techniques de savoir, des procédures de discours ont été capables de l’investir. Entre techniques de savoir et stratégies de pouvoir, nulle extériorité, même si elles ont leur rôle spécifique et qu’elles s’articulent l’une sur l’autre, à partir de leur différence.’ Foucault (1976: 130).

⁷³ Note the correspondence in French of the word ‘discours’ (which has a very broad meaning in comparison to the English word ‘discourse’ as it is used in everyday language) with the expression used by Foucault in this instance: ‘ce qui se dit sur’. On this linguistic difference and its implications for the treatment of ‘discours’/‘discourse’ in the contemporary social sciences, see: Macey (2000: 100).

⁷⁴ Foucault (1976: 132-133). See also: Williams (1999: 95).

⁷⁵ Foucault (1976: 133).

*placé ; avec ce qu'elle comporte aussi de déplacements et de réutilisations de formules identiques pour des objectifs opposés.*⁷⁶

The overview in this passage of Foucault's approach to the analysis of discourse resonates strongly with the overall approach and perspective adopted in this thesis, which aims to 'reconstruct', that is, render apparent through critical analysis, the multiple, polyvalent discursive elements and strategies operating within the print-media texts included in the primary corpus of this study – that is, those texts published in particular New Caledonian newspapers (identified and discussed below) in their contemporaneous coverage of the events considered. I use 'text' in a broad sense, to encompass all elements that can make up a newspaper (including the written text of articles, headlines, images, and so on), considered along with their features of layout and formatting. While sensitive to all of these elements and their interaction, my analysis nevertheless predominantly focuses on the written elements of newspaper texts, because of their considerable importance in the overall articulation of print-media discourse (including, moreover, through discursively framing associated non-written elements such as accompanying images). Following the approach advocated by Foucault, my analysis attends to the heterogeneous and unstable strategic effects of various elements of the texts and discourses under consideration, such as the silences and the position of the discourse participants (including 'author', 'reader' and other subjects/objects) constructed therein.

I adopt the position that all meaning, human perception, subjectivity, knowledge and action are mediated through language and discourse, conceived as social practice simultaneously constituted by and constitutive of the '*bataille perpétuelle*'⁷⁷ of power relations in specific socio-historical contexts. 'Discourse' is thus considered in this thesis in terms of its production or construction of social meaning and in terms of the complex, shifting relations and strategies of '*pouvoir-savoir*' operating within the New Caledonian context relevant to the print-media discourses analysed in this study.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Foucault (1975: 35).

Language and discourse are not conceived as being passive reflections of an external, objective ‘reality’, but as at once constituted by and constitutive of ‘reality’. To recall this perspective, I frequently refer to particular discourses as ‘representing’ and ‘constructing’ certain subjects, objects and modalities. Following Foucault, I treat the discourses analysed as ‘*des éléments ou des blocs tactiques dans le champ des rapports de force*’,⁷⁸ and attempt to highlight their complexity, heterogeneity, instability and ‘*polyvalence tactique*’.⁷⁹

In keeping with Foucault’s use of the term ‘*discours*’ in the passages cited above, I have chosen not to distinguish through terminology the two interrelated senses in which I use the term ‘discourse’, precisely because of their interrelation. These two senses correspond broadly to specific instances of language use (in whole or in part), such as print-media articles or texts, on the one hand, and the various broader ‘discursive formations’ (to use Foucault’s term prominent in his earlier work)⁸⁰ delimiting and

⁷⁸ Foucault (1976: 134).

⁷⁹ Ibid., 132. Thus, as highlighted by Foucault: ‘*il peut y en avoir de différents et même de contradictoires à l’intérieur d’une même stratégie ; ils peuvent au contraire circuler sans changer de forme entre des stratégies opposées*’: *ibid.*, 134-135. An illustration of this ‘*polyvalence tactique*’ of discursive strategies was discussed earlier in this Introduction in relation to the construction of a strict division between ‘culture’ and ‘politics’ in the contemporary New Caledonian context.

⁸⁰ In *L’Archéologie du savoir*, Foucault elaborates the concept of ‘*formations discursives*’ as a means of conceiving and analysing ‘*l’unité d’un discours comme celui de la médecine clinique ou de l’économie politique*’, in relation to which he maintains that: ‘*on a affaire à une dispersion d’éléments. Or cette dispersion elle-même – avec ses lacunes, ses déchirures, ses enchevêtrements, ses superpositions, ses incompatibilités, ses remplacements et ses substitutions – peut être décrite dans sa singularité si on est capable de déterminer les règles spécifiques selon lesquelles ont été formés objets, énonciations, concepts, options théoriques : si l’unité il y a, elle n’est point dans la cohérence visible et horizontale des éléments formés ; elle réside, bien en deçà, dans le système qui rend possible et régit leur formation.*’ Foucault (1969: 95). See also *ibid.*, 53. The unity of these discursive formations is also characterised by Foucault as the product of ‘*un système vertical de dépendances*’, delimiting the possible subject positions, discursive strategies and ‘*types de coexistence entre énoncés*’ within the particular ‘*système de formation*’ in question: *ibid.*, 96. He consequently affirms: ‘*[p]ar système de formation, il faut donc entendre un faisceau complexe de relations qui fonctionnent comme règle : il prescrit ce qui a dû être mis en rapport, dans une pratique discursive, pour que celle-ci réfère à tel et tel objet, pour qu’elle mette en jeu telle et telle énonciation, pour qu’elle utilise tel et tel concept, pour qu’elle organise telle et telle stratégie. Définir dans son individualité singulière un système de formation, c’est donc caractériser un discours ou un groupe d’énoncés par la régularité d’une pratique*’: *ibid.*, 98. It should also be highlighted that discursive practices and formations are not conceived by Foucault as static or atemporal. Foucault thus maintains that a discursive formation: ‘*détermine une régularité propre à des processus temporels ; elle pose le principe d’articulation entre une série d’événements discursifs et d’autres séries d’événements, de transformations, de mutations et de processus*’: *ibid.*, 98-99.

delimited by particular instances of language use, on the other. I want to stress that my focus in terms of what might be identified as the New Caledonian ‘print-media discursive formation’, ‘political discursive formation’ and ‘Kanak culture and identity discursive formation’ is limited – my aim is not to consider discourse in any or all of these domains as a whole or in a ‘complete’ or ‘comprehensive’ manner. Rather, my focus is on the complex and dynamic intersection of these three domains of ‘*pouvoir-savoir*’, but only in so far as these inter-discursive and inter-textual considerations⁸¹ arise from my analysis of the particular, contemporaneous discursive representations in the local written press of the events chosen.⁸² One must consequently keep in mind that the way in which Kanak culture and identity are represented and constructed by the press in its coverage of these events may be different from their representation and construction in the press coverage of other events, subjects or issues (thereby revealing different, if potentially interconnecting, matrices, relations and strategies of power and knowledge).

Fowler and Fairclough

While the above indicates the perspective I adopt in relation to ‘discourse’ and to the broad relevance of a critical analysis thereof, the more specific, concrete ‘tools’ in reference to which I analyse particular aspects of the specific print-media discourses and texts in question also draw on the work of Fowler, Fairclough and various other authors (such as Teun A Van Dijk). My concrete approach to the critical discourse analysis of particular print-media texts is consequently eclectic. Such eclecticism can, moreover, be identified as prevalent among authors in this field⁸³ and has been identified as necessary

⁸¹ Note that inter-discursive and inter-textual considerations are also central to Fairclough’s approach to ‘critical discourse analysis’, as discussed below.

⁸² As stated by Foucault, it is necessary to examine the discourses on any particular subject: ‘*aux deux niveaux de leur productivité tactique (quels effets réciproques de pouvoir et de savoir ils assurent) et de leur intégration stratégique (quelle conjoncture et quel rapport de force rend leur utilisation nécessaire en tel ou en tel épisodes des affrontements divers qui se produisent).*’ Foucault (1976: 135).

⁸³ Fairclough (1995b: 20).

by many of them, who maintain that there can be no single or fixed blueprint for the critical analysis of print-media discourse.⁸⁴ Particularly useful elements of Fowler's work for the present study are his discussion of various linguistic features of print-media texts and discourse,⁸⁵ as well as his discussion of 'consensus' (as seen further below).⁸⁶ The interest of Fairclough's work stems from his discussion of the analysis of specific print-media texts through an expanded 'linguistic' textual analysis (the category of 'linguistics' being extended by Fairclough to include analysis of textual organisation at levels above the sentence, in addition to more traditional forms of linguistic analysis such as those used predominantly by Fowler),⁸⁷ as well as through inter-textual analysis.⁸⁸ Inter-textual and inter-discursive considerations are particularly pertinent for the present study given the active engagement with the local media of the organisers of the events treated and the consequent prevalence of references to the discourses articulated by those organisers within the local print-media.

Fowler identifies the consideration of the context of particular instances of language use as central to his 'critical linguistics', an approach which he defines as seeking:

by studying the minute details of linguistic structure in the light of the social and historical situation of the text, to display to consciousness the patterns of belief and value which are encoded in the language – and which are below the threshold of notice for anyone who accepts the discourse as 'natural'.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Fowler (1991: 90); Williams (1999: 252).

⁸⁵ Fowler pays particular attention to the possible discursive effects of a number of linguistic features identifiable in written news texts, including transitivity, certain syntactic transformations of the clause, lexical structure, modality and speech acts. See Fowler (1991: 65-90).

⁸⁶ On 'consensus' in print-media discourse, see particularly Fowler (1991: 46-58).

⁸⁷ Fairclough (1995b: 57). However, Fowler's discussion of the genre of editorials and of what he refers to as 'conversationalization' and 'consensus' can be seen to go beyond a narrow linguistic analysis: see Fowler (1991: 46-65). Moreover, Fowler's discussion of these topics is particularly relevant to an analysis of the New Caledonian press given that editorial-like features pervade many local print-media publications and there is a strong tradition of opinion-based and/or polemical publications.

⁸⁸ See Fairclough (1995b: 53-102).

⁸⁹ Fowler (1991: 67).

According to Fowler, linguistic structure and semiotic significance do not correspond to each other in any fixed way. Rather, '[t]he significance of discourse derives only from an interaction between language structure and the context in which it is used'.⁹⁰ Fairclough also maintains that the notion of 'discourse' makes social context central to the analysis of particular instances of language use and highlights the dialectical, heterogeneous relationship(s) between language use (as social practice or action) and other aspects of 'the social' more generally, each of which being at once constituted by and constitutive of the other.⁹¹

Consequently, on Fairclough's view, processes of social change can potentially be illuminated through an analysis of discourse, given that the notion of discourse itself points to the socially constructed and therefore potentially mutable or transformable nature of language use, of social practices, of the social more generally and of discourse itself. According to Fairclough, an effective, critical discourse analysis thus potentially provides a powerful means through which to challenge what is linguistically and socially taken-for-granted, including the socio-political status quo and the dominant relations of power within a given society.⁹²

According to Fairclough, discourse analysis must address the three following dimensions and seek to 'show systematic links' between them: firstly, 'texts' (and their 'linguistic' properties, defined broadly); secondly, 'discourse practices' (particular aspects of the processes of production, distribution and consumption of texts); and thirdly, 'socio-cultural practices' (the 'situational', 'institutional' and 'societal' contexts within which both discourse practices and texts are embedded).⁹³ This point is also acknowledged, if not in these terms, by Fowler.⁹⁴ However, unlike Fowler, Fairclough

⁹⁰ Ibid., 90.

⁹¹ Fairclough (1995b: 54-55).

⁹² See Fairclough (1995b: 2-3, 201-205); Fairclough (1998: 144). See also Garrett and Bell's discussion of the 'explicit socio-political agenda' of Fairclough and other analysis working in the field of the 'critical discourse analysis' of the media: Garrett and Bell (1998: 6).

⁹³ Fairclough (1995b: 16-17, 205); Fairclough (1998: 144).

⁹⁴ Fowler (1991).

links texts to ‘discourse practices’ and to ‘socio-cultural practices’ more generally through ‘intertextual analysis’.⁹⁵ On Fairclough’s construction, ‘intertextual analysis’ focuses: ‘on how in the production and interpretation [...] of a text people draw upon other texts and text types which are culturally available to them’.⁹⁶ This link, which ultimately mediates between ‘textual analysis’ and ‘socio-cultural analysis’,⁹⁷ is made by Fowler through socio-linguistic theory and, in particular, the functional linguistics of Halliday⁹⁸ and the basic proposition that differences in linguistic expression or form can and often do carry ‘ideological distinctions’.⁹⁹ This proposition and the work of Halliday are also central to Fairclough’s formulation of ‘intertextual analysis’ and his ‘critical discourse analysis’ more generally.¹⁰⁰

As can be seen from the above discussion, both Fairclough and Fowler use the concept of ‘ideology’ in elaborating their approaches to the critical analysis of media discourse (and discourse in general). In his book entitled *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*, one of Fowler’s uses of the term ‘discourse’ itself corresponds to ‘socially and institutionally organised ideology, encoded in language.’¹⁰¹ Fairclough, on the other hand, maintains that the analysis of media discourse as social practice by ‘critical linguistics’ tends to present ‘a rather monolithic view of the role of media in

⁹⁵ Fairclough (1995b: 53-74); Fairclough (1998: 145).

⁹⁶ Fairclough (1998: 145).

⁹⁷ Indeed, Fairclough maintains that a ‘key feature’ of his version of ‘critical discourse analysis’ ‘is that the link between texts and society/culture is seen as mediated by discourse practices’: *ibid.*, 144.

⁹⁸ Halliday’s functional model of linguistics identifies the three functions or communicative roles of language as the ‘ideational’, the ‘interpersonal’ and the ‘textual’ functions. See Fowler (1991: 32-37).

⁹⁹ Fowler (1991: 4).

¹⁰⁰ On Fairclough’s particular appropriation of Halliday, any particular text is viewed by Fairclough to be: ‘always simultaneously constitutive of (1) social identities, (2) social relations and (3) systems of knowledge and belief’. Fairclough (1995b: 55). Halliday’s ‘ideational’ function corresponds to Fairclough’s category of ‘representations’ (constructed as ‘systems of knowledge and belief’ in (3) above). The ‘interpersonal’ function corresponds to the categories of ‘identities’ and ‘relations’ (numbers (1) and (2)). According to Fairclough, this functional view of language use and texts, ‘makes it easier to connect the analysis of language with fundamental concerns of social analysis: questions of knowledge, belief and ideology (representations – the ideational function), questions of social relationships and power, and questions of identity (relations and identities – the interpersonal function)’: *ibid.*, 17.

¹⁰¹ Fowler (1991: 42).

ideological reproduction'.¹⁰² Fairclough adopts Thompson's definition of ideology as 'meaning in the service of power',¹⁰³ stating that:

ideologies are propositions that generally figure as implicit assumptions in texts, which contribute to producing or reproducing unequal relations of power, relations of domination.¹⁰⁴

Fairclough's work thus effectively emphasises 'the importance of the media and of media discourse in wider processes of social and cultural change, and in wider power relations and ideological processes in society.'¹⁰⁵

However, I do not rely in my analysis on the concept of 'ideology', in contrast to both Fowler and Fairclough. The reasons for this choice highlight a number of important issues relating to the presuppositions of my overall approach and perspective, concerning in particular questions of 'truth', 'the subject' and social agency.

'Ideology' and questions of social agency and critique

In avoiding any reliance on the concept of 'ideology', I am again following Foucault, who identifies three main problems with this concept.¹⁰⁶ The first is the tendency in Marxist or Marxist-inspired conceptions and applications of 'ideology' as a critical analytical tool to construct a dichotomous opposition between what is purportedly 'true' and what is purportedly 'false', including in the domain of human subjectivity and 'consciousness'.¹⁰⁷ To a certain degree, Fairclough's definition of 'ideology' (discussed above) can be viewed as an attempt to circumvent this issue. However, Fairclough can

¹⁰² Fairclough (1995b: 28).

¹⁰³ Thomson quoted in Fairclough (1995b: 14). Reference is to J B Thompson, 1984, *Studies in the theory of ideology*, Polity Press; and J B Thompson, 1990, *Ideology and modern culture*, Polity Press.

¹⁰⁴ Fairclough (1995b: 14). To illustrate this, he identifies two potential examples of when ideologies can often be implicit in texts: 'in the presuppositions (taken-for-granted, 'preconstructed' assumptions) of texts', and 'in the naturalized ways of organizing particular types of interaction'.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁰⁶ Foucault (1980: 118), translated from the original, published in Italian, by Colin Gordon.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

nevertheless be seen to effectively posit the existence of ‘truth’ (and its distinction from what is ‘false’), despite acknowledging that ‘[i]t is possible to assess the importance of particular representations, relations or identities [in discourse] for relations of domination without getting involved in questions about truth.’¹⁰⁸ Indeed, Fairclough maintains that intellectuals and ‘critical discourse analysts’ have an ethical responsibility to make judgements of truth and falsity in their work.¹⁰⁹

In contrast, Foucault maintains that it is necessary for today’s ‘intellectual’ to see ‘historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false.’¹¹⁰ The reference to ‘effects of truth’ in this sentence can be read as ‘effects of power’. For, following from his conceptualisation of power (and its complex interrelations and interactions with knowledge and discourse), Foucault maintains that ‘truth’ should be understood as ‘the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true’, and contends that ‘[t]here is a battle “for truth,” or at least “around truth”’.¹¹¹ Thus, in Foucault’s perspective,

‘[t]ruth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extends it. A ‘regime’ of truth.¹¹²

The two further issues related to the concept of ‘ideology’ identified by Foucault can both be seen to have important implications for the question of social agency. Foucault identifies as problematic the ‘base/superstructure’ model – ‘ideology’ being associated with the concept of the ‘superstructure’, which is generally conceived as being determined by the (material, economic) ‘base’.¹¹³ Related to this is the problem of the

¹⁰⁸ Fairclough (1995b: 15).

¹⁰⁹ Fairclough (1995a: 19).

¹¹⁰ Foucault (1980: 118).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹¹² *Ibid.* See also Foucault (1971: 15-23).

¹¹³ Foucault (1980: 118).

‘subject’, which is, moreover, the third ‘drawback’ of the concept of ‘ideology’ highlighted by Foucault, who states that: ‘ideology refers, I think necessarily, to something of the order of a subject.’¹¹⁴ Foucault rejects the unified, pre-existing or pre-constituted subject (whether individual or collective) as the cause or ‘author’ of history, discourse, knowledge and power.¹¹⁵ It should also be highlighted that, as indicated by Williams, Foucault’s approach to the constitution of ‘subjects’ through the construction of subject positions in discourse has an impact on the conception of subjective identity, for, ‘[i]f the subject is determined in and through discourse, then identities are also established in and through discourse [...]’.¹¹⁶ This is the perspective adopted in this thesis in relation to the concept of ‘identity’.

Following Foucault, the ‘effects’ of discourse (at a local and at a broader, cumulative societal level)¹¹⁷ cannot themselves be conceived as homogenous, uni-directional, stable or pre-determined.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, while the ‘effects’ of any discourse in terms of the circular interrelation between discourse and ‘*pouvoir-savoir*’ (being conceived as constitutive of and constituted by each other) cannot be attributed directly to any unified (individual or collective) subject or subjectivity existing externally to discourse and to

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ See *ibid.*, 117. See also Foucault’s discussion of the subject in the context of his conceptualisation of power and of ‘*pouvoir-savoir*’ in Foucault (1975: 36); and Foucault (1976: 124-125).

¹¹⁶ Williams (1999: 87).

¹¹⁷ Although note that the continuities and discontinuities (including in terms of ‘causation’) between ‘the local’ and ‘the global’ are also complex in Foucault’s perspective. Thus, he identifies as a ‘*règle*’ (in the sense of a ‘*prescription de prudence*’) of his study of the history of sexuality the ‘*double conditionnement*’ of ‘*relations de pouvoir-savoir*’. He explains this ‘rule’ in the following terms: ‘[a]ucun « foyer local », aucun « schéma de transformation » [de pouvoir-savoir] ne pourrait fonctionner si, par une série d’enchaînements successifs, il ne s’inscrivait en fin de compte dans une stratégie d’ensemble. Et inversement, aucune stratégie ne pourrait assurer des effets globaux si elle ne prenait appui sur des relations précises et ténues qui lui servent non pas d’application et de conséquence, mais de support et de point d’ancrage. Des unes aux autres, pas de discontinuité comme s’il s’agissait de deux niveaux différents (l’un microscopique et l’autre macroscopique) ; mais pas non plus d’homogénéité (comme si l’un n’était que la projection grossie ou la miniaturisation de l’autre) ; il faut plutôt penser au double conditionnement d’une stratégie par la spécificité des tactiques possibles, et des tactiques par l’enveloppe stratégique qui les fait fonctionner.’ Foucault (1976: 131-132).

¹¹⁸ Foucault thus talks about: ‘un jeu complexe et instable où le discours peut être à la fois instrument et effet de pouvoir, mais aussi obstacle, butée, point de résistance et départ pour une stratégie opposée.’ Foucault (1976: 133).

relations of '*pouvoir-savoir*', subject positions do exist within discourse and certain forms of agency can be engaged by (decentred)¹¹⁹ subjects, despite the constraints and limits of discourse and relations of '*pouvoir-savoir*'.

In advocating the adoption of a 'critical attitude' or 'ethos', Foucault maintains that the criticism to be engaged is not transcendental, but 'genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method.'¹²⁰ Foucault states that, as 'archaeological' work, this criticism 'will seek to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as so many historical events.'¹²¹ As 'genealogical' work, this criticism

will not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know; but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think. It is not seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science; it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom.¹²²

It should be highlighted that the 'decentring' of the subject has been followed, in certain respects and to varying degrees, by authors such as Fowler and Fairclough, despite the elaboration of their perspectives from the starting point of linguistics (which has tended to rely on the centred subject in its conception and analysis of language).¹²³ In the case of these two authors, the movement towards the decentred subject stems partly from their appropriation of Halliday's functional linguistics and partly from their

¹¹⁹ This is the term used by Williams in his discussion of Foucault and other authors: Williams (1999). Note that Foucault's reconceptualisation of power as relational necessarily decentres subjectivity and agency and provides a different framework for their own reconceptualisation.

¹²⁰ Foucault, 'What Is Enlightenment?', translated from the original in German by Catherine Porter, published in *Rainbow* (1991: 46).

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ According to Williams, orthodox linguistics 'tends to involve the centred rational subject as dipping into the resources of language in order to convey a meaning which is created and controlled by that individual subject.' Williams (1999: 5).

problematisation, following broader trends in the discipline of ‘media studies’, of the relationships between ‘author’, ‘text’ and ‘reader’ (or production, text and discourse, and reception or consumption), where increasing emphasis has been placed on the active, if still constricted, role of the reader in the construction of meaning in texts.¹²⁴

In this regard, it should be noted that the present study does not include any real consideration of the audience reception of local print-media texts in New Caledonia in this vein. Academic research is, moreover, yet to be undertaken in this field. While questions are raised at certain points in this thesis about the ‘reflective’ character and/or the ‘productive’ influence of certain texts, of certain discourses and/or of certain organs of the local written press in relation to particular aspects or elements of New Caledonian society (especially in reference to the assertions which have been made by other authors on these topics), these questions remain largely unanswered here.

The reason for this is that the critical analytical perspective adopted in this thesis attempts to avoid over-simplification and reductionism, including in relation to issues concerning the production and effects of discourse and social meaning. This perspective thus represents an attempt to remain sensitive to and critically oriented towards the complexities and instabilities of local print-media discourses within the local ‘*champ multiple et mobile de rapports de force*’¹²⁵ as it has evolved over time.

The New Caledonian written press from 1975 to 2005

Before turning to the critical discourse analysis presented in the three main Chapters of this thesis, it is worth considering the perspectives and insights provided by various authors in relation to the historical, political, economic and institutional contexts of the New Caledonian newspapers included in the present study. The papers analysed in this thesis have been broadly restricted to those falling into the category of the ‘general

¹²⁴ Fowler (1991: 42-47, 60); Fairclough (1995b: 15-16); and see above discussion.

¹²⁵ Foucault (1976: 135).

information press'. This includes the daily newspapers in print at the relevant times, as well as a number of weekly and monthly papers. None of the papers studied explicitly identify themselves as being the official publication of any particular political party or group. *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* (LNC) has a particular place and prominence in this study, given that it is the only daily newspaper to have been in print for the full thirty-year period between 1975 and 2005 and has held a monopoly over the local daily newspaper market for the majority of that time.

The local written press at the time of *Mélanésie 2000*

Chapter One presents an analysis of four local papers in print during all or part of the key period of *Mélanésie 2000*'s organisation and realisation, a period which began in 1974 and concluded in September 1975 with *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival. These four publications include two daily newspapers, LNC and *La France Australe* (LFA), and two weekly publications, *Le Journal Calédonien* (LJC) and *Les Calédoniens* (LC).¹²⁶ These four publications also formed the basis of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the local written-press coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* undertaken by Philippe Missotte as part of his doctoral thesis, completed in 1985.¹²⁷ Missotte was himself directly involved in the organisation and realisation of *Mélanésie 2000*. His study is discussed further in Chapter One.

Mélanésie 2000 constitutes the only event of those studied in this thesis to have occurred at a time in which LNC did not hold a monopoly over the local, mass-circulation print-media market. LNC was founded in 1971 by Roger Brissaud, a metropolitan journalist who had previously established a successful daily newspaper in Tahiti, and Jean-Paul Leyraud, a local businessman and proprietor of a printing house

¹²⁶ *Les Calédoniens* was actually created as a bi-weekly in February 1975, but became a weekly publication in April of that year.

¹²⁷ Missotte (1985: 411-541). Extracts of this study appear in Missotte (1995a). It is also referred to more briefly in Missotte (1995b).

who belonged to an influential New Caledonian family.¹²⁸ Brissaud and Leyraud were the sole apparent financial backers of this venture.¹²⁹ LNC was created in direct competition to another, well established, local daily newspaper, LFA.

First published in 1889, LFA had previously enjoyed a monopoly position in the local daily news market since 1933.¹³⁰ LFA has been identified by several authors as having always represented the interests of big business and industry in New Caledonia.¹³¹ By the 1970s, its proprietor, the *Société Calédonien d'Éditions* (SCE), was controlled by the *Société Le Nickel* (SLN), the Territory's largest and oldest nickel mining company at that time, which held an 80% interest in SCE, the other 20% belonging to its original majority owners, the powerful local commercial firm, *Ballande*.¹³² Commentators have characterised this newspaper as having sought a highly 'consensual' tone and as having actively avoided political subjects and contentious social issues.¹³³ According to Michel Gérard, who was LFA's Director and Editor-in-Chief from mid 1967 until the end of 1975,¹³⁴ the SLN influenced, both directly and indirectly (through the auto-censure practiced by journalists), the political and economic line of the paper.¹³⁵

LNC met with immediate success, which has been attributed to its attraction of both readers and advertisers through the adoption of a 'populist', sensationalist and polemical tone,¹³⁶ as well as an emphasis on local news and events¹³⁷ and an 'attractive'

¹²⁸ Chanter (1996: 77-78).

¹²⁹ Godard (1992: 253). Nevertheless, some speculation seems to have existed about the investment of so-called 'Paris money' in the fledgling publication: Chanter (1996: 78). Edouard Ventrillon, a young New Caledonian journalist, was made '*directeur délégué*' in Brissaud's original editorial team and was also a key figure in orchestrating the early success of LNC: Madoeuf (1986: 44-45).

¹³⁰ Chanter (1996: 37)

¹³¹ Godard (1992: 246); Chanter (1996: 37).

¹³² Picquet (2002: 37). These figures are taken from Madoeuf (1986: 42).

¹³³ Godard (1992: 246); Picquet (2002: 37-38).

¹³⁴ Picquet (2002: 75, footnote 28); and 'Transcription complète de l'entretien avec Michel GERARD', in Piquet (2002: Annex, XL).

¹³⁵ Picquet (2002: 75-76); and 'Transcription complète de l'entretien avec Michel GERARD', in Piquet (2002: Annex, XLIII).

¹³⁶ Chanter (1996: 43); Picquet (2002: 38, 43).

modern presentation in which considerable space was devoted to photographic reports and attention-grabbing headlines (particularly on the front page),¹³⁸ combined with reduced advertising rates.¹³⁹ LNC is reported in *Le Mémorial Calédonien* as having reached a circulation of 15 000 and as selling double the number of copies as LFA by 1976.¹⁴⁰ LFA ceased publication in 1979, having become financially unviable and too heavy a burden for even the SLN to support.¹⁴¹

However, despite differences in ownership, editorial direction, presentation, tone and content, in 1975 and throughout the period of their direct competition, LNC and LFA can, on the view of certain authors, be identified as having both consistently represented and supported the interests of the dominant social, political and economic elite in the New Caledonian context of the time.¹⁴² Consequently, and as confirmed by the analysis of the daily newspapers' coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* in Chapter One, the discourses articulated by these two newspapers can be seen overall to have been geared towards reinforcing and perpetuating the status quo then persisting in New Caledonia.

Karine Picquet maintains that both LNC and LFA can be seen to have adopted a broadly 'consensual' tone.¹⁴³ The discursive construction of a specific type of (presupposed and asserted) social 'consensus' in order to create, perpetuate and/or legitimate particular social inclusions and exclusions and particular relations of power within a given society has been identified by Fowler as a highly significant discursive strategy often mobilised by different organs of the mass-distribution print media.¹⁴⁴ Fowler identifies such

¹³⁷ Chanter (1996: 78).

¹³⁸ Godard (1992: 254); Picquet (2002: 38).

¹³⁹ Chanter (1996: 78).

¹⁴⁰ Godard (1992: 253).

¹⁴¹ Picquet (2002: 36).

¹⁴² See the preliminary comparative study conducted by Picquet of the content of several issues of LFA, LNC and *Nouméa-Soir* (a daily publication produced from 1972 to 1974) printed in February 1973: Picquet (2002: 39-43). This preliminary study was undertaken to verify comments made by Max Chivot to this effect in an article published in *Le Réveil Canaque*, no. 22, 1973, 7-9, cited in Picquet (2002: 39).

¹⁴³ Picquet (2002: 37-38).

¹⁴⁴ Fowler (1991: 16-17, 46-58).

models of social ‘consensus’ (also referred to by him as ‘ideologies of consensus’) constructed in print-media discourse as corresponding to the conception of a particular society as sharing ‘all its interests in common, without division or variation’,¹⁴⁵ and therefore as necessarily engendering the perpetual reconstruction of discursive and actual social divisions between (the consensual, homogenous) ‘us’ and (the threatening, deviant) ‘them’. Such models of social ‘consensus’ are described by Fowler as being ultimately designed to consolidate and perpetuate the status quo and the dominant matrix of power within a particular society at a particular time.

It should, however, be noted that such models of social ‘consensus’ identifiable in particular print-media publications and texts are not fixed and homogenous – rather, as with all discursive strategies, they are mutable and adaptable, changing in different contexts and through time. This is also acknowledged by Fowler, who maintains that: ‘the consensual image is taken through a variable lens, and [the (‘consensual’) pronoun] “we” sometimes narrows [...], sometimes broadens’.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, according to Fowler, ‘consensus’

assumes, and in times of crisis actually *affirms*, that within the group, there is no difference or disunity in the interests and values of any of the population, or of any institution.¹⁴⁷

The particular model of social ‘consensus’ identifiable in the discourse elaborated by LNC and LFA in 1975 is closely linked to New Caledonia’s historical and, more specifically, colonial context. As highlighted by Alaine Chanter, the past and present interrelationships between New Caledonia’s media institutions and processes of colonisation and decolonisation are highly complex and heterogeneous.¹⁴⁸ Chanter maintains that colonisation

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 16.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 49.

¹⁴⁷ Original emphasis, footnote omitted, *ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Chanter (1996: 33).

constituted the politico-economic and cultural context within which the institution of the media *per se* emerged within the territory, and the territory's media, whether apologetic or oppositional, bear the mark of this difficult engagement.¹⁴⁹

Issues of colonisation and decolonisation were, moreover, particularly salient in New Caledonia in 1975, the first official political call for independence having been made towards the end of June in that year, as discussed in Chapter One. Both LFA and LNC clearly evinced their opposition to independence in their treatment of this political development. Although this political 'event' does not appear to have had an immediate impact on the treatment of *Mélanésie 2000* in the local press, the positioning of different print-media institutions in relation to independence and to questions of colonisation and decolonisation can nevertheless be identified as central to their representations of the nature and significance of *Mélanésie 2000*, particularly by reason of the festival's inscription in a particular historical perspective linking New Caledonia's past, including the '*fait colonial*' and its negative impacts on the country's indigenous people, to the present and the future, as seen in Chapter One.

It should be emphasised that, as partially signalled by Fowler, such models of social 'consensus' do not correspond to an actually existing empirical 'reality'. Fowler maintains in this connection that 'consensus is posited about a set of beliefs or values, not facts,' so that, '[i]f the facts do not square with the beliefs, then apologists for consensus must make their language work hard to suggest that reality does fit in with belief.'¹⁵⁰ Fowler's apparent presupposition of the existence of objective 'facts' existing outside of discourse is problematic, as discussed above. However, transposed to the domain of inter-textual and inter-discursive analysis and understood in terms of the Foucauldian conception of discourse as a '*série de segments discontinus, dont la fonction tactique n'est ni uniforme ni stable*'¹⁵¹ within the context of a '*champ multiple*

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Fowler (1991: 50).

¹⁵¹ Foucault (1976: 133).

et mobile de rapports de force’,¹⁵² Fowler’s contentions are broadly confirmed in the critical discourse analysis of the local print-media coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* presented in Chapter One.

Particularly given the relative conformity of the two local daily newspapers in print in 1975, other print-media publications published less frequently and catering to smaller, more specifically targeted readerships, such as LJC and LC, are also important points of reference as they provide access to different voices and discourses, often representing some of the more ‘extreme’ and/or marginalised perspectives that were otherwise excluded from or occluded in the mass-circulation, ‘mainstream’ written press.

As in the case of the two daily newspapers, both LJC and LC pretend to ‘objectivity’. Certainly, neither of these publications was officially presented as being the organ of any local (or national) political party, movement or group. However, both LJC and LC were linked relatively directly to the domain of New Caledonian politics through their ownership and/or the political involvement of their editorial direction and journalists. The overall political and ideological positioning of each of these publications is, moreover, evident in the discourses promulgated therein, as seen further in Chapter One.

In 1975, LJC was a conservative and staunchly anti-independence weekly paper owned by the Lafleur Group,¹⁵³ having been purchased in 1967 by Henri Lafleur,¹⁵⁴ a longstanding conservative politician and ‘*petit mineur*’ from an established local ‘European’ family. Henri Lafleur passed away in 1974 and bequeathed his fortune and business interests to his three sons, one of whom, Jacques, would go on to found the *Rassemblement pour la Calédonie* (RPC) in 1977 (which would become the RPCR in 1978 and the *Rassemblement–UMP* or RUMP in 2004). From that time, Jacques Lafleur would occupy a central position in local politics, which he held for close to thirty years.

¹⁵² Ibid., 135.

¹⁵³ Picquet (2002: 71).

¹⁵⁴ Godard (1992: 249); Picquet (2002: 71).

LJC's editorial direction was assured by Pierre Maresca, a '*pied-noir*' who would similarly enter New Caledonian politics in 1977 as a founding member of Jacques Lafleur's conservative, right-wing, anti-independence party. Publication of LJC ceased in that same year.

In many respects, the discourse articulated by this weekly paper in 1975, as the *de facto* print-media organ of a particular component of New Caledonia's local 'European' social, political and economic elite, can be seen to construct the same model of social 'consensus' as LNC and LFA. However, in contrast to the discourse articulated by the two daily newspapers, that of LJC is considerably more direct and explicit in the expression of its own perspective and judgements (which are nevertheless represented as being 'objective' and as being shared by the majority of New Caledonians, constituting the same posited social 'consensus' described above), being more overtly politically engaged.

In contrast, LC, a radical, socialist publication, can be seen to position itself outside the 'mainstream' social 'consensus' constructed and supported by LNC, LFA and LJC, of which LC is highly critical. This oppositional political position and the paper's consequent marginalisation is suggested by Missotte, who maintains that, while LNC, LFA and LJC were classified in 1975 by the French '*Haut-Commissariat*' in New Caledonia as being '*presse d'information*', LC was classified as '*presse d'opinion*', '*afin d'éviter de l'inviter aux réunions de presse*'.¹⁵⁵

LC was created in February 1975 and ceased publication in 1976, apparently due to 'financial pressures'.¹⁵⁶ The socialist, anti-colonial stance of this publication is clearly conveyed in its subtitle, which ran: '*Vivre égaux et différents avec des lois justes dans une Calédonie libre*'. Chanter characterises LC as having been:

¹⁵⁵ Missotte (1985: 486).

¹⁵⁶ Chanter (1996: 42).

a leftist paper which supported Kanak protests and independence and which gave prominence to sympathetic discussions of Melanesian culture and disadvantage.¹⁵⁷

Jean-Paul Caillard, a young local 'European' doctor from a family which had been established in the Pacific for several generations,¹⁵⁸ was the publication's proprietor (and presumably also its principal financier), as well as being its '*Responsable*' (or Director) and a member of its small editorial and journalistic team.¹⁵⁹ Caillard himself was actively involved in anti-colonial, anti-capitalist militant action in New Caledonia from the late 1960s and was an active member of the radical socialist youth group, the *Union de la jeunesse calédonienne* (UJC), formed by a number of local 'Europeans' in 1973.¹⁶⁰ The Editor-in-Chief of LC was Claude Nègre, identified by Missotte as '*un journaliste venu de métropole plusieurs années avant*.'¹⁶¹

As discussed in Chapter One, although LC was initially highly critical and skeptical in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*, by the time of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival in September 1975, the paper was overall highly supportive of the project. Moreover, the three editions of the '*Journal du comité organisateur du festival Mélanésie 2000*', entitled *Melanesia* and available for purchase during the main festival at the festival venue, were produced in direct collaboration with LC.¹⁶²

It is important to highlight that, as discussed in Chapter One, the various positions adopted and expressed by LNC, LFA, LJC and LC in relation to *Mélanésie 2000* can themselves be seen to have changed significantly throughout the period of the festival's preparation and realisation, from its first appearance as a news item in 1974 to the

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Missotte (1985: 518).

¹⁵⁹ 'Chronologie des années 1974 – 1975 – 1976' (1995: 60); 'Tableau des titres de presse d'opinion publiés en Nouvelle-Calédonie entre 1946 et 1983', in Picquet (2002: Annex, LIX).

¹⁶⁰ 'Chronologie des années 1974 – 1975 – 1976' (1995: 58); Chappell (2003a: 194, 198); Mokaddem (2005a: 149).

¹⁶¹ Missotte (1985: 518).

¹⁶² Ibid. See also the three editions of this publication reproduced in *ibid.*, Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 79-101.

appearance of the last articles relating to *Mélanésie 2000* published in the wake of the main festival in September 1975. The nature of these changes is particularly revealing in terms of the different papers' socio-political orientations and the discursive strategies mobilised for various socio-political ends.

Missotte similarly traced and sought to explain this evolution and its significance in his 1985 study.¹⁶³ While many elements of Missotte's 1985 analysis of the coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* in the local written press, including a number of his broad conclusions, are echoed in the analysis of the same publications presented in Chapter One, the present study has a somewhat different focus by reason of its forming part of a broader analysis of the local print-media coverage of several 'cultural' events from 1975 to 2005. In light of this broader perspective, particular attention is given to specific aspects of the contemporaneous coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* in the local written press so as to bring to the fore the similarities and differences between the print-media coverage of the 1975 festival and the more recent events considered in this thesis within their broader discursive and socio-political contexts.

The local written press through the 1980s and 1990s

The local print-media context in 1975 was very different to that in 1998, at the time of the inauguration of the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou*. The work of two authors in relation to the New Caledonian media during the intervening period and at the time of the inauguration constitute particularly useful points of reference for the present study in providing some insight into the nature and significance of the broad changes which had taken place. The first of these authors, Alain Chanter, completed a study entitled *Contested Identity: The media and independence in New Caledonia during the 1980s* in 1996 and has also published a series of articles in relation to the media in New Caledonia during the 1980s and the 1990s.¹⁶⁴ The second author, Jenny Briffa,

¹⁶³ Ibid., 411-541.

¹⁶⁴ Chanter (1991); Chanter (1996); Chanter (1999); Chanter (2000), Chanter (2002).

completed a study in 2002 entitled *La parole emprisonnée : Les relations entre les pouvoirs politiques et les médias en Nouvelle-Calédonie 1988-2002*.¹⁶⁵

As noted previously, the period between *Mélanésie 2000* and the inauguration of the CCT saw the progressive crystallisation of the Kanak independence movement and the ‘loyalist’¹⁶⁶ opposition to independence, the outbreak of violent conflict in New Caledonia between these two broad political ‘camps’ in the 1980s, and the conclusion and implementation of the ten-year Matignon Accords peace agreement reached in 1988. Moreover, the official signing of the Noumea Accord occurred on the day after the CCT’s inauguration. As emphasised by both Chanter and Briffa, the significant changes which took place in the domain of the local media between 1975 and 1998 were themselves intimately connected to New Caledonia’s changing political context. Indeed, on Briffa’s analysis, ‘*le champ journalistique calédonien n’a cessé d’être soumis au champ politique*’ throughout the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁶⁷

Since the demise of LFA in 1979, LNC has successfully retained its dominance in the local mass-distribution print-media market. LNC thus still remains the only local daily newspaper published in New Caledonia today. This monopoly has persisted despite numerous short-lived attempts to publish rival local daily newspapers throughout the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁶⁸ These rival publications were all ultimately forced to close by reason of various political and financial pressures, generally associated with the influence exerted by Lafleur’s RPCR.¹⁶⁹ While these rival daily newspapers are significant in that they provided different discursive constructions of ‘the news’ in New Caledonia, they are not considered in this thesis primarily because the brief periods in

¹⁶⁵ Briffa (2002).

¹⁶⁶ Note Chanter’s discussion of the emergence in early 1985 of this term and the particular local identity it came to signify. Chanter (1996: 152-173).

¹⁶⁷ Footnote omitted, Briffa (2002: 47).

¹⁶⁸ Two notable examples of such attempts were *Le Journal de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (commonly referred to *Le Journal bleu*), which began publication in February and ceased in May 1986, and *Le Quotidien Calédonien*, which appeared in December 1995 and ceased publication in July 1997. See Chanter (1996: 52-54); Hennequin (1998: 505-506); Briffa (2002: 40-42).

¹⁶⁹ Chanter (1996: 52-54); Hennequin (1998: 506); Chanter (2002: 19); Briffa (2002: 8, 42, 55-61).

which they were produced do not correspond to the dates of the main events considered. The same is the case for the large-circulation weekly and monthly publications produced during this period.¹⁷⁰

Chanter maintains that subsequent to the closure of LFA in 1979 the 'resolute stance' of LNC 'against independence and its denigration of pro-independence Kanaks was to become increasingly aggressive as the following decade progressed.'¹⁷¹ Particularly during the period of '*les événements*' in the 1980s, the anti-independence discourse of LNC (this newspaper having expressly adopted a position against independence) demonstrated a systemic 'anti-Kanak' and racist inflection.¹⁷² Moreover, as noted by Briffa, when acquired in 1987 by Robert Hersant's group *France-Antilles* (renamed *Groupe Hersant Média* in 2006), LNC,

*qui soutenait déjà la cause loyaliste, devient tout naturellement un relais du RPCR. En effet, dans tous les DOM-TOM, le groupe Hersant s'attache à « mettre en valeur la présence française » et à soutenir la droite.*¹⁷³

In response to their radical marginalisation and denigration in the 'loyalist'- and 'European'-dominated mass-circulation local media of the time,¹⁷⁴ the Kanak

¹⁷⁰ These publications include, for example, the extreme right-wing, staunchly anti-independence (and, according to Chanter, 'neo-fascist') weekly, *Corail*, and the similarly positioned weekly, *Combat Calédonien*. Chanter (1996: 43-44).

¹⁷¹ Chanter (1996: 43).

¹⁷² Chanter (1996: 93, 108, 122); Chanter (2002: 19, 33-34). This is also confirmed by Briffa (2002: 37-39). It should be noted that a common argument levelled by the local 'loyalist' right (and propounded within various 'loyalist'-oriented newspapers) against the Kanak independence movement was that the political goal of specifically *Kanak* independence was itself inherently racist. This kind of inversion has similarly been identified by Teun A van Dijk as a discursive strategy mobilised by the British right-wing press. According to van Dijk, such a strategy is mobilised 'in an overall strategy of face-keeping, positive self-presentation [and negative other-presentation], and social impression management'. Van Dijk maintains that '[r]eversal or *blaming the victim*' is a functional strategy used systematically by 'the Right and its press' when accused of intolerance and racism, 'the move of reversal' being 'the ultimate form of self-defence.' Original emphasis, van Dijk (1993: 259-262).

¹⁷³ Footnotes omitted, Briffa (2002: 37-38). Chanter similarly highlights the close alignment from this point of the newspaper's editorial line and the political programs of Lafleur's RPCR and the Chirac government: Chanter (1996: 117). See also Chanter (1996: 49-50).

¹⁷⁴ Chanter (1996: 52).

independence movement led several boycotts of that media¹⁷⁵ and consciously sought to engage with the international and national (French) media, as well as creating its own local media organs in addition to the small publications and leaflets already produced by various pro-independence parties.¹⁷⁶ A certain continuity can be identified between this intensified Kanak mobilisation in relation to the domain of the media in the 1980s and the approach adopted by Jean-Marie Tjibaou and the other organisers of *Mélanésie 2000*, who attempted to engage with the local press as a means of furthering a number of the festival's objectives. On several occasions in subsequent years, Tjibaou emphasised the need for Kanak people to appropriate and mobilise the '*outil*', or '*moyen contemporain*', represented by the media to further their political and cultural *revendication* and to promote the transmission and development of Kanak culture and society in the contemporary context.¹⁷⁷ In 1985 the FLNKS created a pro-independence Kanak radio station, *Radio Djido*,¹⁷⁸ and a weekly (which later became a bi-monthly) paper, *Bwenando*, subtitled '*Le premier journal de Kanaky*'.¹⁷⁹ While *Radio Djido* continues broadcasting to this day, *Bwenando* ceased publication in 1989. It should also be noted that the FLNKS created the *Agence kanak de presse* in 1988, which ceased operation in 1990.¹⁸⁰ No specifically Kanak or 'Kanaky' publications with a large distribution falling under the classification of 'general information press' were, however, in print at the time of the three events studied in this thesis. For this reason, as with the other short-lived or sporadic publications discussed above, they are not considered in any detail.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 48, 50.

¹⁷⁶ See broadly in this connection *ibid.*, 175-221.

¹⁷⁷ See, for example, Tjibaou (1996: 90, 159-160).

¹⁷⁸ Note that the inaugural Director of this radio station was Octave Togna. Togna's departure from *Radio Djido* was signalled by his designation as the inaugural Director of the *Agence de développement de la culture kanak* in 1989. As seen in Chapter Two, Togna played a key role in the conceptualisation and realisation of the CCT project.

¹⁷⁹ See Chanter (1996: 51); Klein (1999d: 339-340); Briffa (2002: 41).

¹⁸⁰ Klein (1999d: 340).

It should also be noted that, according to Chanter, *Bwenando* and the other periodic pro-independence Kanak publications produced during the 1980s ‘tended to be read almost exclusively by sympathizers.’¹⁸¹ Chanter contrasts this with the monopoly daily LNC, which was read widely by pro- and anti-independence locals alike as a means of obtaining information on the events taking place throughout the country in the 1980s and subsequently.¹⁸² Chanter notes that the political bias and engagement of the newspaper is well known by its readers (despite the newspaper’s self-representation as ‘a mainstream, politically neutral publication’).¹⁸³ She also acknowledges that ‘the extent to which readers identify with the subject positions constructed in media discourse is always open to question’.¹⁸⁴ However, in a 2002 article, Chanter nevertheless identifies LNC as being the ‘main public mouthpiece’ of the local ‘European’ population (which was and remains predominantly opposed to independence), effectively positing a relatively direct correlation between the views and beliefs constructed and expressed in the discourse of this newspaper with those held predominantly by the local ‘European’ population.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, Chanter attributes to the discourse of LNC considerable influence and ‘power’ in relation to the perception

¹⁸¹ Chanter (2002: 20).

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 19. Note that in her study of the local media Chanter draws particularly on Foucault’s post-structuralist perspective in relation to ‘identity’ and ‘discourse’, while simultaneously drawing on certain neo-Marxist perspectives and the concept of ‘ideology’, as well as on the Gramscian concept of ‘hegemony’: Chanter (1996).

¹⁸⁵ Chanter (2002: 18, 33-34). Writing in 1985 in relation to the written press coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* ten years earlier, Missotte similarly posited such a correlation, maintaining that: ‘[L]e contenu de la presse quotidienne suit de près l’opinion des Européens natifs de Nouvelle-Calédonie et des partis politiques de tendance conservatrice qu’elle reflète et modèle. La manière dont ils ont rendu compte de *Mélanésie 2000* permet d’y rechercher les indices qui appuient ou infirment l’hypothèse quant à leur attitude à l’égard du milieu mélanésien’. Missotte (1985: 512). Moreover, writing in 1995, Missotte also affirmed that, beyond the vague contemporary and subsequent anecdotal evidence, ‘[s]eule l’analyse de la presse calédonienne du début de la préparation aux retombées de la manifestation – mars 1974 à septembre 1975 – permet d’approcher plus objectivement les représentations des Européens à l’égard du Festival.’ Missotte (1995b: 94).

and actions of individuals and groups in New Caledonia in the 1980s and 1990s, due largely to its 'popularity and everydayness' and to the paper's monopoly position.¹⁸⁶

Both Chanter and Briffa maintain that certain significant discursive and institutional changes took place in the sphere of the (still 'European'-dominated) mass-circulation local written press subsequent to the conclusion of the Matignon Accords in 1988. According to Briffa, a comparison between the discourse of LNC before and after the 1988 Matignon Accords reveals a radical transformation,¹⁸⁷ particularly apparent in the way in which the Kanak '*indépendantistes*' (who had previously been depicted and denigrated as 'savages', 'terrorists' and 'extremists')¹⁸⁸ were now recognised by this newspaper as legitimate actors in the political domain.¹⁸⁹ Considerably more and, at least superficially, 'neutral' attention was consequently devoted to the *indépendantistes* and to the 'news' of the regions within which they were politically dominant from this time.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, although LNC was still primarily based in the ('loyalist'- and 'European'-dominated) capital, it can be seen to have progressively broadened its focus, establishing, for example, its first branch outside Noumea in 1989 in Koné, the 'capital' of the Northern Province, '*[a]fin de répondre aux effets de la décentralisation*',¹⁹¹ brought about by the Matignon Accords.¹⁹²

Various other regional monthly publications were also created in the wake of the Accords, including notably *Tour de Côte* (TDC) and *Construire les Loyautés* (CLL). TDC, which is based in and focused on '*la brousse*', was founded in 1990 and, despite

¹⁸⁶ Chanter (2002: 19-20, 34). For example, Chanter maintains that LNC's 'hostility towards the pro-independence movement, and the racist tenor of much of its reporting, contributed substantially to a polarization of opinion over the question of independence and the emergence of political violence in the period 1984-1988': *ibid.*, 19. See also Chanter (1996: 30).

¹⁸⁷ Briffa (2002: 71).

¹⁸⁸ Chanter (1996: 108, 111, 122).

¹⁸⁹ Briffa (2002: 39; 71-74). See also Chanter (1996: 55).

¹⁹⁰ Briffa (2002: 71-74).

¹⁹¹ 'Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes créent une agence en province nord et Tour de Côte s'installe', *Tour de Côte*, no. 111, December 2000 – January 2001, 25.

¹⁹² See also Hennequin (1998: 502).

having been an initiative of the *Province Nord*, is owned by the same media conglomerate as LNC.¹⁹³ According to Hennequin, TDC ‘s’interdit [...] d’évoquer la politique « politicienne ».’¹⁹⁴ In contrast, CLL, which is based in and focused on the Loyalty Islands, was created in 1992 and, being funded and produced by the *Province des Îles*, ‘est vraiment « l’outil » de l’exécutif provincial.’¹⁹⁵

Briffa maintains that LNC, like the local media in general, ‘s’est approprié le consensus politique né des Accords de Matignon.’¹⁹⁶ Briffa also contends that, by reason of their appropriation of this ‘esprit de consensus’, many journalists and the editorial direction of many local media organs chose during this period to avoid treating subjects which might call into question or undermine that political consensus.¹⁹⁷

However, as acknowledged by Henri Lepot, a journalist at LNC, regardless of this newspaper’s change in tone and approach in relation to Kanak ‘indépendantistes’ subsequent to the Matignon Accords, a close link remained between the newspaper and the dominant right-wing, ‘loyalist’ political party, the RPCR.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, as maintained by both Briffa and Chanter, the concordance between the social and political perspectives and positions of LNC and the RPCR (seemingly corresponding in turn to a shared, particular version of social ‘consensus’ within New Caledonia in the Matignon Accords context and, more particularly, to a broadly shared vested interest in the maintenance of the status quo, as far as possible) is apparent in the newspaper’s coverage of the local ‘news’. This proximity is further confirmed by the fact that the weekly publication created in 1988 and entitled *Les Nouvelles Hebdo* (LNH) identified by Briffa as the ‘organe du RPCR’ (despite never having been openly acknowledged as

¹⁹³ ‘Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes créent une agence en province nord et Tour de Côte s’installe’, *Tour de Côte*, no. 111, December 2000 – January 2001, 25; Hennequin (1998 : 504).

¹⁹⁴ Hennequin (1998: 504).

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Briffa (2002: 69). This is confirmed by Hennequin, both generally and specifically, in relation to LNC. Note particularly Hennequin’s quote from Rémy Le Goff, the newspaper’s ‘*rédacteur en chef*’ from 1992 to 1996, in this connection. Hennequin (1998: 501-503).

¹⁹⁷ Briffa (2002: 77-78).

¹⁹⁸ Briffa quotes from her own interview with Henri Lepot: *ibid.*, 78, footnote 1.

such by the party itself),¹⁹⁹ was distributed and sold each Thursday along with LNC at an augmented price.²⁰⁰ While the two publications had distinct editorial teams, LNH was substantially financed by *France-Antilles* throughout this period.²⁰¹

Certain changes in local media discourse are also identified by Briffa as having taken place subsequent to the conclusion of the Noumea Accord.²⁰² She maintains that the ‘consensus’ propounded by the media subsequent to the signing of the Noumea Accord in 1998 was articulated ‘avec les référentiels’ of that agreement in place of those of the Matignon Accords.²⁰³ Briffa contends that the vocabulary of the Noumea Accord affirming ‘« la construction du pays » qui se fera entre les « citoyens calédoniens » unis « dans une communauté de destin »’ was readily adopted by the dominant organs of the local media,²⁰⁴ including LNC. Nevertheless, according to Briffa, the daily newspaper’s strong links to Lafleur’s RPCR continued, and its coverage was overall highly supportive of that party and its leader at that time.²⁰⁵ Briffa’s observations in this regard are generally supported by the analysis presented in Chapter Two this thesis of LNC’s coverage of the inauguration of the CCT in 1998.

Given the initial inscription of the CCT project in the politics of the Matignon Accords and the timing of its inauguration on the day before the official signing of the Noumea Accord, the coverage of the inauguration in the local written press is of particular interest for a consideration of these discursive changes. The primary focus of the

¹⁹⁹ Similarly, Hennequin states that ‘*l’hebdo se définit comme « un journal d’opinion, engagé en faveur du maintien de la Calédonie dans la France et qui s’est inscrit dans l’esprit des accords de Matignon »*’, but identifies LNH as being ‘*en effet le porte-parole*’ of the RPCR. Hennequin (1998: 503).

²⁰⁰ Briffa (2002: 39). See also Chanter (49-50).

²⁰¹ See Hennequin (1998: 503); Briffa (2002: 38); Chanter (1996: 49-50).

²⁰² Note that Chanter’s studies do not cover this period.

²⁰³ Briffa (2002: 78, footnote 1). Briffa cites from her interview with Alban Bensa in this connection, according to whom journalists working in the local media seemed independently and spontaneously to appropriate ‘*l’esprit des accords de Nouméa*’ in composing their articles.

²⁰⁴ Briffa (2002: 11).

²⁰⁵ The Editor-in-Chief of LNC between 1996 and 2000 was Didier Fléaux. Briffa argues that, as demonstrated in his editorials and interviews, Fléaux ‘*recentre clairement le journal derrière le RPCR*’: *ibid.*, 38. See also Hennequin (1998: 502-503).

analysis presented in Chapter Two is the coverage of the inauguration published by LNC, as well as by LNC, TDC and CLL. Consideration is also given to the coverage of this event in the newly created monthly satirical publication, *Le Chien bleu* (LCB), although that publication devoted relatively little attention to the event.

LCB, which first appeared in April 1998 and which is still published today, is modelled on the metropolitan publication *Le Canard enchaîné*. LCB is a small-scale publication, created and directed by Etienne Dutailly, who also writes the majority of its articles.²⁰⁶ This publication staunchly affirms its independence from external political and economic influences and, to that end, does not include any advertising.²⁰⁷ Its treatment of ‘culture’ and ‘cultural events’ (such as those considered in this thesis) generally only extends to various brief criticisms of certain aspects of the initiatives and related issues or controversies, with a particular focus on the (invariably purportedly self-interested) motivations of the different politicians and key players implicated therein.

The local written press from 2000

By 2003 the new local politico-institutional framework defined by the Noumea Accord had been implemented and established. Moreover, in the period between the CCT’s inauguration in 1998 and the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in 2003, and in the periods between the successive events organised around the *Mwâ Kâ* in 2004 and 2005, a series of significant changes took place within the interconnected domains of local politics and print media institutions in New Caledonia.

²⁰⁶ Briffa (2002: 42).

²⁰⁷ Ibid. The overall tone of the publication was set in the ‘Editorial’ on the front page of its first edition, which proclaims that ‘[l]e Chien bleu n’est pas un journal de combat pour tel ou tel clan’, affirming rather: ‘dans les colonnes du Chien bleu, il y en aura pour tout le monde : de la gauche très gauche à la droite très droite, des catholiques aux protestants, des Nouméens aux broussards ou encore des bébés aux vieillards, des bagnards aux libérés ou des riches aux pauvres, c’est une forme de consensus... Le Chien bleu écrira ce qu’il voudra, quand il le voudra, et comme il le voudra... Nom d’une crotte !’ La rédaction, ‘Editorial – Le Chien bleu fait ce qu’il veut’, *Le Chien bleu*, no. 69 [sic], 10/04/1998, 1. In keeping with this position, the phrase ‘Y’en aura pour tout le monde’ would replace ‘Le journal qui sort quand il peut’ as the paper’s subtitle from 1999.

One of these significant, albeit short-lived, changes highlighted by Briffa is a period of several months in 2001 in which LNC ‘*se sont émancipées de la « tutelle éditoriale » du RPCR*’.²⁰⁸ According to Briffa, this shift was brought about by a change in the editorial team and direction of the newspaper²⁰⁹ and by a dispute between the direction of *France-Antilles* and Jacques Lafleur over the longstanding arrangements regarding the production, distribution and associated costs (and, by this time, considerable losses) of LNH.²¹⁰ Briffa maintains that Lafleur refused to agree to any modification of the arrangement relating to the costs of producing and distributing LNH,²¹¹ and the reaction of the RPCR to the daily newspaper’s ensuing ‘editorial emancipation’ was particularly strong.²¹² In July 2001, LNC stopped distributing LNH and, on Briffa’s account, ‘[l]a rupture semblait donc consommée entre le groupe Hersant et Jacques Lafleur’.²¹³ However, a new agreement between the Hersant Group and Lafleur was reached in April 2002, which not only resolved their primary conflict over the production of LNH (which would now be distributed separately from the daily newspaper as ‘*Le Nouvel Hebdo*’ and would no longer be produced at the Hersant Group’s expense)²¹⁴ but which also resulted in the return to a favourable editorial line in LNC in relation to Lafleur and the RPCR.²¹⁵

As seen in Chapter Three, this (re-found) favourable orientation of LNC to Lafleur’s RPCR is readily apparent in its coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in 2003. Similarly, the 2003 coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* published by LNH can be seen to clearly reflect that

²⁰⁸ Footnote omitted, Briffa (2002: 96-97).

²⁰⁹ Bruno Francesci and Marc Spisser arrived from the ‘*métropole*’ to head the paper as its Director and Editor-in-Chief respectively: *ibid.*, 38.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² According to Briffa, this included: ‘*agressions du directeur du journal, menaces téléphoniques, communiqués contre le journal, appel au boycott (publicitaire, de l’achat du journal, d’informations), intervention auprès du groupe Hersant, et des ministères.*’ Footnotes omitted, *ibid.*, 97.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 39.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 39, 97. See also ‘Les Nouvelles rentrent dans le rang’, *Le Chien bleu*, no. 45, May 2002, 7.

paper's close association with and support of Lafleur and the RPCR, and to propagate the particular construction of the Noumea Accord and the local social and political context advanced by (and in the interests of) that political formation. Moreover, the specific orientations of these two publications become particularly evident when their coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* is compared to that event's coverage in other local print-media publications, such as *Les Infos* (LI), which first appeared in September 2002, and, to a lesser extent, LCB.

Both of these latter publications can be seen to have substantially enhanced the freedom and plurality of expression present in New Caledonia's contemporary print media. Writing in 2002 (but before the publication of LI) Briffa highlighted the importance of the appearance in 1998 of LCB (New Caledonia's only local satirical newspaper), characterising it as constituting (at that time): '*le seul réel espace de liberté d'expression en Nouvelle-Calédonie.*'²¹⁶ However, LCB contains relatively little treatment of the *Mwâ Kâ* (in line with its treatment of other 'cultural' events and topics, including the inauguration of the CCT).

In contrast, as seen in Chapter Three, LI devotes considerable attention to the *Mwâ Kâ* initiatives in 2003, 2004 and 2005. This coverage incorporates a wide number and range of voices and discourses, indicative of the nature of this newspaper's overall contribution to the freedom and plurality of expression and opinion represented in New Caledonia's print media.²¹⁷ This contribution was itself one of the expressed aims of

²¹⁶ Briffa (2002: 96). In Briffa's view: '[s]on ton, délibérément provoquant, et ses enquêtes qui dénoncent la corruption des élus et l'illégalité de nombreuses pratiques, dérangent l'ensemble de la classe politique.'

²¹⁷ Note that by reason of the development of and increasing access to information technologies and the internet in New Caledonia, freedom of expression and the plurality of voices, perspectives and information available in the country today have been substantially enhanced. For example, in addition to an increasing number of locally focused online blogs and forums (including *Calédosphere*, *Kanaky Online* and *Radio Djido Kanaky Online*, available respectively at <<http://www.caledosphere.com>>, <<http://fr.groups.yahoo.com/group/kanaky>> and <<http://www.radiodjido.nc/forum/portal.php>>), LNC changed its online format in May 2010 and added a new 'comment' function for its articles available on its website. However, while advances are being made in this area, access to the internet in New Caledonia still remains limited, particularly for the economically disadvantaged and those living in remote areas (the majority of people within these two categories being Kanak).

this publication, as stated in an editorial signed by ‘*La rédaction*’ and published in the first edition of the paper in September 2002. According to this editorial, the creation of LI was aimed at providing local readers with the choice of ‘*un autre regard sur l’information*’, and with a ‘*tribune libre à tous les Calédoniens, connus ou moins connus, afin qu’ils nous livrent chaque semaine leurs impressions*’.²¹⁸

True to this aim, the weekly paper provides a different editorial line to that of LNC and, while clearly positioning itself in favour of (its construction of) the objectives and the process announced by the Noumea Accord, LI does not hesitate to highlight the political and social contention surrounding various key elements of that Accord or to question its potential outcomes. The Noumea Accord is often mobilised in this publication as a means of critiquing the positions and actions of various local politicians and other actors in New Caledonian public life. LI also publishes a substantial number of texts each week signed by individuals from all political persuasions and walks of life, often (but not exclusively) in its ‘*Tribune libre...*’ column.²¹⁹ LI thereby provides a forum for free expression and substantially contributes to the diversity of voices, perspectives and discourses expressed in the local public sphere.

The editorial published in the first edition of LI stressed the paper’s (purported) objectivity, stating that:

*Les Infos n’ont pas d’autre but que d’informer avec objectivité. [...] Objective, cela signifie, selon le Petit Larousse, « qui existe indépendamment de la pensée, qui ne fait pas intervenir d’éléments affectifs, personnels dans ses jugements ».*²²⁰

The founder and original ‘*Directeur*’ of LI was Dominique-Pierre Mariotti, a ‘*Calédonien*’ of European origin whose family settled in New Caledonia in the 19th

²¹⁸ La rédaction, ‘Editorial : Naître un jour de pays mort’, *Les Infos*, no. 1, 27/09/2002, 2.

²¹⁹ This column is accompanied by the following disclaimer: ‘[*I*]es propos de la Tribune libre n’engagent que leurs auteurs’.

²²⁰ ‘Editorial : Naître un jour de pays mort’, *Les Infos*, no. 1, 27/09/2002, 2.

century.²²¹ Mariotti appears to have been replaced by the paper's Editor-in-Chief (and member of its journalistic team), metropolitan journalist Thierry Squillario, in mid-2004. According to one report, Mariotti left the paper at this time in response to its 'undesirable' (in his view) procurement by 'un récent élu' after the May provincial elections which saw Lafleur's RPCR (newly rebaptised the *Rassemblement-UMP*) reduced to a minority party and the political rise of its rival, the newly created and more moderate 'loyalist' party, *Avenir Ensemble*.²²² Frédéric Angleviel also maintains that LI was engaged politically in favour of *Avenir Ensemble* at the time of the 2004 elections by reason of the paper's financial dependency on the advertising revenue obtained from various local businesses in which Didier Leroux (who would be elected in 2004 as a member of *Avenir Ensemble*) had a large commercial interest.²²³ Leroux had previously been involved in the creation of an ultimately unsuccessful daily newspaper in competition with LNC in 1995, entitled *Le Quotidien Calédonien*.²²⁴

However, in an article signed 'La rédaction' and published by LI in June 2006, the newspaper asserts its editorial independence, maintaining that, after having supported *Avenir Ensemble* in the 2004 elections, it later expressed critical views in relation to those newly in power which resulted in significant financial difficulties for the publication.²²⁵ As seen in Chapter Three, such a shift in the editorial position of LI in

²²¹ Mariotti's great uncle was the celebrated New Caledonian writer, Jean Mariotti. 'Dominique-Pierre Mariotti prend la parole !!!', *Le cri du cagou* (blog), 02/04/2006 <<http://lecriducagou.canalblog.com/archives/2006/04/02/1625805.html>>. Mariotti signed himself as a, 'Citoyen Kalédonien [;] Citoyen du monde', at the end of a piece published on the internet blog *Calédosphère* in August 2008: '5 mn avec Dominique Pierre Mariotti : Le Pays Parle', *Calédosphère* (blog), 01/08/2008, <<http://www.caledosphere.com/?p=4737>>. Mariotti's own personal history as a 'Calédonien de souche' and self-identification as such can be seen to be reflected in the comparatively extensive coverage published by LI of the formation, activities and concerns of the *Fondation des pionniers de Nouvelle-Calédonie* from February 2003 in articles often signed by Mariotti himself or by members of this association.

²²² Reported in 'Dominique-Pierre Mariotti prend la parole !!!', *Le cri du cagou* (blog), 02/04/2006, <<http://lecriducagou.canalblog.com/archives/2006/04/02/1625805.html>>.

²²³ Angleviel (2005: 287, footnote 19).

²²⁴ Hennequin (1998: 505-506); Briffa (2002: 40).

²²⁵ La rédaction, 'A nos lecteurs', *Les Infos*, no. 193, 16/06/2006, 1. Indeed, this article, which is addressed to the paper's readers in the name of maintaining 'un maximum de transparence sur la vie de

relation to *Avenir Ensemble* is confirmed in its coverage of the public events organised on the 24 September around the *Mwâ Kâ* in 2004 (when the paper's criticism was levelled exclusively against the positions of Jacques Lafleur, Pierre Frogier and the *Rassemblement-UMP*) and in 2005 (when the paper also expressed a critical view of the positions of certain key *Avenir Ensemble* politicians).

The political upheaval brought about by the 2004 elections can be seen to have had a significant impact on the 'loyalist'-oriented local newspapers. The results of these elections prompted Lafleur to resign as President of the Southern Province and withdraw from the local political institutions (while still retaining his seat as a deputy in the French National Assembly) and led in July 2005 to his replacement as the President of the *Rassemblement-UMP* by Pierre Frogier. According to LI's report, LNH ceased publication in June 2005 as a result of a decision by Lafleur (as its majority shareholder) prompted by his perception of the publication's bias in favour of Frogier.²²⁶ Furthermore, while LNC can be seen to still retain its broadly 'loyalist', conservative and right-wing orientation, subsequent to these political changes the daily no longer appears to so blatantly and unquestioningly support any of the prominent 'loyalist' political figures or parties.

The broad-brush overview presented above of the changing political and institutional contexts and the broad discursive orientations of the particular newspapers analysed in the present study provides a useful point of entry into the concrete analysis of particular print-media texts in the three Chapters which follow.

votre journal', identifies the resulting, dire financial situation as threatening the paper's continued appearance and calls for contributions from '*d'éventuels bienfaiteurs*' to help alleviate the situation.

²²⁶ Thierry Squillario, 'La mise à mort du Nouvel Hebdo : Jacques Lafleur a décidé d'arrêter la publication de l'hébdomadaire du RPCR', *Les Infos*, no. 139, 03/06/2005, 1. LI commented: '*cela prive bien évidemment le futur parti de Pierre Frogier d'un organe de propaganda important.*'

CHAPTER ONE

***Mélanésia 2000* and political perspectives in the local written press: the discursive occlusion of a radical politics of Kanak culture and identity**

Mélanésia 2000, the ‘*premier festival des arts mélanésiens en Nouvelle-Calédonie*’, was held from Wednesday 3 to Sunday 7 September 1975 on a specially created site on the Tina Peninsula, located on the outskirts of Noumea. This main festival was subsequently identified by its organisers as having involved the participation of 2 000 Kanak participants from throughout the *Grande Terre* and New Caledonia’s other islands, as well as having attracted 50 000 spectators.¹ The September main festival was preceded by a lengthy period of organisation and preparation, which included a series of regional mini-festivals held throughout the New Caledonian archipelago between February and August 1975.²

Mélanésia 2000’s organisation and preparation was principally guided and undertaken by the festival’s Organising Committee, which was formed from within another newly created body in the Territorial administration – the *Comité pour le développement*, constituted in May 1974.³ Jean-Marie Tjibaou was the President of both committees.⁴ In addition to securing the necessary funds and the material and technical support for

¹ Tjibaou (1978). This was also the figure of spectators given by LFA in its coverage of the event. However, LNC estimated a total of 36 000 entries. ‘50.000 SPECTATEURS à Mélanésia 2000’, *La France Australe*, 08/09/1975, 1; ‘36 000 ENTRÉES À MÉLANÉSIA 2000’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/09/1975, 1; and see the discussion below.

² On Missotte’s account, a total of eight regional mini-festivals were held in the following locations: Lifou; Tiga; ‘*Sud*’ – Yaté; ‘*Nord*’ – Bondé; Ouvéa; Maré; Koné; Canala. See Missotte (1985: 444-446); Missotte (1995b: 75-77). Only seven mini-festivals were covered in the local daily newspapers (no mention was made in either daily of the Tiga mini-festival). The press coverage suggests several inaccuracies in the dates specified by Missotte for a number of these mini-festivals, as discussed below.

³ This body also included members of several non-governmental Kanak associations. See Missotte (1985: 439-442).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 425, 442.

Mélanésia 2000 (particularly from various local and metropolitan government departments and bodies), the festival's Organising Committee defined the objectives, content and nature of the festival and assured its practical realisation. This included the dissemination of information on the festival project to the local press and the realisation of several publications and audio recordings in conjunction with the festival. It also included the creation of the main festival's large bush-land site, which involved the installation of the necessary infrastructure and facilities and the construction of a number of 'traditional' Kanak *cases*.

During the five days of *Mélanésia 2000*'s main festival in September, the public was invited to experience many aspects of Kanak culture through the demonstration and/or presentation of Kanak 'arts and crafts' (such as dance, music, sculpture and weaving), Kanak cuisine and 'traditional' Kanak games or competitions.⁵ On the Friday and Saturday nights a large-scale theatrical production or '*jeu scénique*' entitled *Kanaké* was performed. The *jeu scénique* represented Kanak life prior and subsequent to colonisation and suggested a new path for attaining a harmonious future shared by all people, Kanak and non-Kanak, living in the country. The main festival also incorporated significant public opening and closing ceremonies, which were connected to the 'privately' conducted (that is, inter-Kanak) 'customary' ceremonies of welcome and farewell held in the days immediately prior and subsequent to the main festival. These 'customary' ceremonies were themselves a key component of the broader '*démarche coutumière*' initiated by the Organising Committee from 1974 as the means of inscribing the realisation of *Mélanésia 2000* within a specifically Kanak dynamic of socio-political interaction, connecting Kanak people throughout the New Caledonian archipelago, notwithstanding the many distinctions between groups from different areas.

⁵ See the program of the main festival in Bonnabesse and Missotte (1975: 10-11).

***Mélanésie 2000* in context**

As with all of the events treated in this thesis, *Mélanésie 2000* and its representation in the contemporaneous coverage of the local written press need to be considered in relation to the broader socio-historical and discursive context(s) of the time. In this regard, the relative position of the Kanak population within New Caledonian society in the first half of the 1970s is central. Indeed, the entrenched and systemic marginalisation of Kanak people at the time, resulting from colonisation and from the social, economic and political changes taking place in New Caledonia in the 1960s and 1970s, was foregrounded in the various publications produced in association with *Mélanésie 2000* by its organisers. Moreover, the contemporary situation of Kanak people collectively was represented in these publications as having motivated the festival project itself and as consequently framing its objectives and overall aim – to transform that situation.

The political nature of *Mélanésie 2000* relates to its inscription within a particular historical narrative and perspective. As a result of this inscription, the festival project had tacit implications for the question of sovereignty in New Caledonia, arising from the recognition of the Kanak people as the country's colonised, indigenous people. The common identification today of *Mélanésie 2000* as Jean-Marie Tjibaou's first major political act and engagement in the public domain⁶ is consequently not simply a function of hindsight. Rather, the inherently political nature of *Mélanésie 2000* is apparent in various elements of the festival as it was discursively constructed and articulated by Tjibaou and the other members of the festival's Organising Committee at the time of the event.

⁶ This is despite the fact that Tjibaou would only formally enter politics in 1977, from which date his '*trajectoire épouse, de manière définitive, le mouvement nationaliste kanak*': Mokaddem (2009: 41). As stated by Mokaddem: '*[t]out le monde connaît la première grande œuvre politique de Tjibaou : Mélanésie 2000*': Mokaddem (1999: 320). Moreover, Mokaddem identifies the same broad approach to the organisation of *Mélanésie 2000* in Tjibaou's subsequent approach to his work as an elected political representative – Mokaddem maintains that '*[T]a méthode de travail politique de Tjibaou réactive la pratique culturelle et logistique de Mélanésie 2000*': Mokaddem (2009: 63). See also Mokaddem (2005a: 166-167).

The primary means through which the Organising Committee can be seen to have worked to discursively articulate and realise the festival project and its objectives were: the various publications it produced in conjunction with *Mélanésie 2000* in 1974, 1975 and 1976;⁷ the Committee's engagement with the local media in 1974 and 1975; and certain aspects of the festival project's realisation itself, such as the inter-Kanak '*démarche coutumière*' pursued in 1974 and 1975, the festival logo created in 1974, the 'customary' and official public discourses pronounced in 1975 during the regional mini-festivals and the main festival's opening and closing ceremonies, and the *jeu scénique* performed during the main festival.

In his subsequent account, Philippe Missotte placed particular emphasis on the function of the written materials produced by the Organising Committee, stating:

*[d]ans la mesure où tout ne pouvait être perçu et/ou reconnu dans l'instant, à la fois comme expérience, réflexion et prise de conscience, les moyens de communication, en particulier, les imprimés et ouvrages d'édition devenaient les véhicules du sens et les moyens de décryptage du symbole.*⁸

The overall picture painted by these publications of the contemporary situation of the Kanak community and its various causes corresponds broadly to the way in which that

⁷ The Organising Committee's *Mélanésie 2000*-related publications include: the initial '*plaquette de présentation*' produced in 1974 to explain and promote the festival project (reproduced in Missotte (1995b: 66-69); Tjibaou (1996: 31-33)); the main festival's Program (Bonnabesse and Missotte (1975)) distributed to festival ticket holders (Missotte (1995b: 88, footnote 106)); the booklet entitled *Vers Mélanésie 2000* (Jean-Marie Tjibaou, Henry Azapunia, Jacques Iékawé, Basil Citre and Philippe Missotte, *Vers Mélanésie 2000*, Noumea, Graphical, 1975 – I have not directly consulted this booklet, all discussion of which is consequently based on the following secondary sources: Missotte (1985); Missotte (1995b); Waddell (2008)) and the three issues of the festival newspaper (reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 79-101)) which were available for purchase at the main festival site; and the book produced in 1976 and republished in 1978, co-authored by Tjibaou and Missotte, entitled *Kanaké, Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Tjibaou and Missotte (1978)). The *jeu scénique* can also be included in this list of the Organising Committee's publications, especially given that its script was reproduced in the Festival Program (Dobbelaere and Tjibaou (1975)).

⁸ Missotte continues: '*[d]ans l'immédiat, même superficiellement, ils préparaient la rencontre en expliquant l'événement et en apprêtant les esprits. Ils devenaient les moyens de référence ultérieure qu'emportaient aussi bien les invités que les participants.*' Missotte (1985: 437). Note that as a member of *Mélanésie 2000*'s Organising Committee Missotte was personally involved in the production of the Festival Program and the other written materials produced by the Committee in conjunction with the festival.

situation and its socio-historical context have been characterised in much of the academic work published subsequently. It also corresponds to parts of the historical narrative elaborated over twenty years later in the Preamble of the 1998 Noumea Accord.

The devastating impacts of Kanak dispossession and the imposition of a repressive and exploitative juridico-administrative regime during the colonial period⁹ are among the factors highlighted by the festival's organisers. The significant and lasting impact on Kanak culture and communities of the introduction of Christianity through the Catholic and Protestant missionaries established in New Caledonia prior and subsequent to its official '*prise de possession*' by France is another.

Particularly from 1969 to 1974, the Territory experienced an unprecedented economic boom resulting from a rise in the international demand for nickel.¹⁰ However, in line with various other commentators,¹¹ Missotte maintains that, especially once the effects of the subsequent recession began to be felt from 1976, this so-called '*boom du nickel*' itself proved to be '*un puissant révélateur des inégalités débouchant sur la revendication indépendantiste*'.¹² The Kanak population, which had generally remained 'poorly integrated' into the dominant Western social, educational and economic systems in New Caledonia, even following its accession to French citizenship, was marginalised yet further during this period, both in material and symbolic terms.

One particularly significant aspect of this increasing marginalisation identified by many authors was produced by the dramatic rise in immigration to New Caledonia throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. According to Isabelle Leblic, the local population increased

⁹ An overview of which is provided in Annex 1.

¹⁰ Illustrating the significance of this boom, Chappell notes that New Caledonia's nickel exports increased three-fold between 1966 and 1968. This economic boom was itself also connected to the French Government's progressive removal of New Caledonia's political autonomy and self-government (discussed below) – as noted by Chappell, in 1969 'the three *lois Billotte* took away territorial control over mining, [and] large-scale investments', among other things. Chappell (2003a: 191).

¹¹ Including, for example, Barbançon (1992: 33-40).

¹² Footnote omitted, Missotte (1995b: 64).

by 20% between 1969 and 1979.¹³ This influx of people changed the demographic balance between ethno-cultural groups living in the Territory – the official censuses conducted in 1969 and 1976 indicate that the Kanak population fell from 45.9% to 41.7% of the Territory's total population, despite there having been a significant increase in the size of Kanak population itself during this period.¹⁴ Not merely the result of the increased local demand for workers during the nickel boom, this wave of immigration was actively encouraged by the French Government as a strategy of maintaining (colonial) control over the Territory. Indeed, migration from France and its Overseas Departments and Territories to New Caledonia appears to have been viewed by the French Government of the time as a means of countering emergent Kanak nationalism and demands for decolonisation and independence.¹⁵

Furthermore, according to Missotte, 'foreign' labour was generally preferred to Kanak labour throughout the economic boom, resulting in a steady fall in the relative proportion of Kanak people in paid employment.¹⁶ Very few Kanak people were employed in the public service or in senior public or private sector positions. Access by Kanak individuals to such positions (and to the workforce in general) was hindered in part by their minimal formal educational and vocational qualifications. Along with unemployment and widespread alcohol abuse, '*l'échec scolaire*' experienced by Kanak youths was particularly highlighted by the organisers of *Mélanésie 2000* as being among the major problems facing the Kanak community in the 1970s and into the future.¹⁷

¹³ Leblic (2003: 302).

¹⁴ Ahmed-Michaux and Roos (1997: 22).

¹⁵ Leblic (2003: 302). To support this contention, Leblic refers to a letter from the French Prime Minister Pierre Messmer to the State Secretary of DOM-TOM in 1972. See also Chappell (2003a: 191).

¹⁶ Missotte (1995b: 64). According to Tjibaou and Missotte in *Kanaké, Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie*, while Kanak people represented 40% of the country's total population, they represented only 24% of salaried workers in 1976. Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 14).

¹⁷ Tjibaou and Missotte (1978); and see Missotte (1995b: 60-66). The imposition of the French language as the official (and exclusive) language used and taught in schools, in the public and private sectors and in the media in New Caledonia was identified as further contributing to these problems and as a significant factor in the symbolic marginalisation of Kanak people 'in their own country'. Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 22); Missotte (1995b: 66).

However, the 1960s and early 1970s also saw the departure and return of the first small group of Kanak individuals to undertake tertiary studies, a path which then necessarily involved a period spent in Metropolitan France.¹⁸ This new Kanak intellectual elite is characterised by Trépied as having constituted the '*acteurs privilégiés du renouveau politique et culturel mélanésien*' – the '*réveil canaque*' – between 1969 and 1975,¹⁹ that would subsequently constitute the '*ciment de la revendication d'indépendance kanak et socialiste*'.²⁰ Particularly informed by their intellectual and political experience in Metropolitan France (a time which for many coincided with the height of student radicalisation around May 1968), these individuals formulated new understandings and critiques of New Caledonia's colonial heritage, persisting Kanak marginalisation and subordination, and the serious social crisis identified as facing Kanak communities within the broader New Caledonian context of the time.²¹

Many authors who have written on New Caledonia in the late 1960s and early 1970s have stressed the importance of the political context of the time, framed by a series of laws passed in the 1960s²² which resulted in the unilateral withdrawal by France of the significant political (and economic) autonomy and powers of self-government granted to the Territory in 1956 by the '*loi-cadre*' of Gaston Defferre.²³ This important structural change was instituted despite the opposition expressed by New Caledonia's then dominant political party, the *Union Calédonienne* (UC), which represented the majority of Kanak voters.²⁴ David Chappell maintains that these political developments

¹⁸ They included Apollinaire Anova Ataba, Nidoïsh Naisseline, Elie Poigoune, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, Fote Trolue, Déwé Gorodey, Boniface Ounou, Roch Wamytan and Paul Néaoutyine.

¹⁹ Trépied (2007: 605). '*Le réveil canaque*' was the title of a monthly paper published by the *Foulards Rouges* between 1970 and 1974. David Chappell associates the phrase '*réveil canaque*' exclusively with the emergence in New Caledonia of the new, radical anti-colonialist perspective and militant action engaged by the *Foulards Rouges* and the *Groupe 1878* between 1969 and 1976. Chappell (2003a: 187-202).

²⁰ Trépied (2007: 608).

²¹ Ibid., 604-610. See also Mokaddem (2005a: 93-151).

²² Particularly the '*loi Jaquinot*' in 1963 and the '*lois Billotte*' in 1969.

²³ Chappell (2003a: 188-191); Leblic (2003: 301).

²⁴ Michel Levallois, who was the Secretary-General of the Territory during the period of *Mélanésie 2000*'s preparation and organisation, would subsequently characterise the positions of the political parties

were understood by the ‘anti-colonial radicals’ from the new Kanak intellectual elite, who first appeared on the local political scene in 1969, as effecting ‘the “recolonization” of New Caledonia’.²⁵

However, the ‘*réveil canaque*’ initiated by the new Kanak intellectuals had two principal ‘*voies*’, constituted by two different modes of collective mobilisation.²⁶ A distinction is thus drawn by various authors between the approach and actions of the radical Marxist and anti-colonial Kanak groups (principally the *Foulards Rouges* and the *Groupe 1878*),²⁷ on the one hand, and the approach and actions of Jean-Marie Tjibaou (working with a number of other individuals and groups) culminating in the realisation of *Mélanésie 2000* itself, on the other.

The approach adopted by the *Foulards Rouges* and the *Groupe 1878* was directly confrontational and they actively engaged in opposition to the French State and its ‘colonial’ administration in New Caledonia.²⁸ While these groups were created and positioned themselves outside New Caledonia’s formal political structures and

in existence at the time as having been articulated primarily in reference to the ‘*débat sur l’avenir du Territoire*’, framed until 1975 primarily in terms of the question of New Caledonia’s relative ‘autonomy’, rather than ‘independence’, from France. Thus, Levallois states: ‘*les partis politiques du Territoire, Union Calédonienne et Union Multiraciale défendant des positions autonomistes d’une part, EDS, UD, et MLC se prétendant anti-autonomistes d’autre part, essayaient d’obtenir du gouvernement des formules institutionnelles qui leur auraient assuré le plus large contrôle du Territoire, et à la partie de la population qu’ils représentaient, les meilleurs avantages.*’ Levallois (1995: 125). The latter group of (conservative and right-wing) parties referred to by Levallois are the *Entente Démocratique et Sociale*, the *Union Démocratique* and the *Mouvement Libéral Calédonien*.

²⁵ Chappell (2003a: 188).

²⁶ Trépied (2007: 604-605). See also *ibid.*, 626. Broadly the same distinction is drawn in Mokaddem (2005a: 127).

²⁷ The *Foulards Rouges* was created in 1969 and had a strong Loyalty Islands membership and focus, being led particularly by Nidoïsh Naisseline – the son of the ‘*Grand Chef*’ of the Guahma district of Maré who would, in 1973, succeed his father in that role. The *Groupe 1878* was created in 1974 by Elie Poigoune, Déwé Gorodey and other Kanak radicals from the *Grande Terre*. In contrast to the *Foulards Rouges*, one of the primary concerns of the *Groupe 1878* was the question of indigenous land rights by reason of the history of colonial dispossession of Kanak lands on the *Grande Terre* (as discussed in Annex 1).

²⁸ See Mokaddem (2005a: 127); Trépied (2007: 610).

institutions,²⁹ their perspective and actions were expressly political in character.³⁰ Drawing from their experience of the student–worker uprising in 1968 in Metropolitan France, these radical groups strategically engaged in acts of civil disobedience and sought to mobilise grass-roots support and militant activism against the ‘colonial’ (French) State in New Caledonia.³¹

Independence was officially brought onto the agenda of mainstream party politics in New Caledonia in June 1975, a few months before *Mélanésia 2000*’s main festival. This resulted from the official collective adoption of a pro-independence stance and the formation of the *Comité de coordination pour l’indépendance kanake* calling for a referendum on independence by Yann Céléné Urégéi (then President of the Territorial Assembly), his party the *Union Multiraciale de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (UMNC),³² the UC’s Kanak elected representatives (including Roch Pidjot, its longstanding Deputy to the French National Assembly), as well as the principal radical Kanak groups existing at the time.³³ While this *Comité* would be dissolved in October 1975,³⁴ the question of

²⁹ However, as noted by Chappell, throughout this period these groups were, to various, fluctuating degrees, associated with the Kanak politician Yann Céléné Urégéi and the political party he formed in 1970/1971, the *Union Multiraciale de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*. Chappell (2003a: 196-199).

³⁰ Note that the same type of militant, anti-colonial action, similarly drawing on a Marxist perspective, was also engaged by a number of ‘European’ New Caledonians who had also returned to the Territory after completing tertiary studies in Metropolitan France in the same period. These Kanak and non-Kanak individuals worked together for a period from 1969, but subsequently decided to separate so as to allow each group to address the specific problems relating to their respective positions in New Caledonian society resulting from colonisation. Ibid., 196.

³¹ Trépied (2007: 615-616). Their militant engagement involved publishing various political periodicals and leaflets, holding public meetings (in Noumea and in communities outside the capital, particularly including various Kanak ‘tribus’), painting political graffiti, circulating petitions and conducting peaceful protests, many of which were violently repressed by the police, leading in turn to further violent confrontations in relation to the criminal conviction and imprisonment of some of the activists involved. For details regarding these strategies and events, see Chappell (2003a: 192-199).

³² This was the first exclusively Kanak political party to have been created in New Caledonia. It was formed in 1970/1971 by a group of Kanak UC politicians, led by Urégéi, who split from the UC on the question of its commitment to obtaining greater autonomy for New Caledonia and in opposition to the ‘European’-dominated leadership and orientation of the party in spite of its predominantly Kanak electoral base. Chappell (2003a: 196).

³³ Gabriel and Kermel (1985: 105-106); ‘Chronologie des années 1974 – 1975 – 1976’ (1995: 59). In an interview published by LC in early July 1975, Elie Poigoune identifies the position adopted by the *Groupe 1878* against *Mélanésia 2000* (discussed below) as having prompted the rapprochement between that group, on the one hand, and the UC and the UMNC, on the other. Poigoune identifies this

independence would, from June 1975 onwards, overtake that of autonomy as the principal fault line structuring politics in New Caledonia.³⁵

This move in the local political domain to an expressed engagement and discourse in favour of independence by Kanak politicians and radical militants can be contrasted to the way in which Tjibaou and the other key individuals involved in the organisation of *Mélanésie 2000* positioned themselves in their public discourse as working effectively outside the domain of politics and attempted to distance the festival initiative from the intense political conflict surrounding the question of New Caledonia's political future. The work engaged by Tjibaou in the first half of the 1970s (subsequent to his return to New Caledonia after tertiary studies in the '*Métropole*'),³⁶ culminating in *Mélanésie 2000*, was undertaken in association with the local administration. This work in favour of Kanak social, cultural and educational development and promotion was consequently situated outside the sphere of formal politics but within the domain of the State administration, and was largely funded and supported by the State. As acknowledged by Joseph Caihe in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*: '*la situation de l'époque ne nous permettait pas de parler politique, [...] sinon on aurait [sic] pas eu les 32 millions de l'Etat et donc on n'aurait pas pu organiser Mélanésie 2000.*'³⁷ The direct association of this 'cultural' and 'development' work, including *Mélanésie 2000*, with partisan politics

rapprochement as having taken place on the initiation of the two political parties and as having ultimately crystallised in the formation of the *Comité de coordination pour l'indépendance kanake*. 'M. ELIE POAGOUNE EXPLIQUE : « NOUS AVONS LANCÉ LE MOT INDÉPENDANCE, MAINTENANT IL VA FALLOIR TRAVAILLER LE CONTENU »', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 22, 03-09/07/1975, 3. Note that in March of 1975, the *Foulards Rouges* divided into three groups, each based on one the Loyalty Islands: *Atsai* (Ouvéa), *Ciciquadry* (Lifou), *Wayagi* (Maré). These three groups, along with the *Groupe 1878* and the group, *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne*, were all members of the *Comité de coordination pour l'indépendance kanake* in 1975. See 'Chronologie des années 1974 – 1975 – 1976' (1995: 59); 'DISSOLUTION DES FOULARDS ROUGES', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 8, 15/03/1975, 7. In May 1976, *Atsai*, *Ciciquadry*, *Wayagi* and *Groupe 1878* would merge to create the *Parti de Libération Kanak* (Palika).

³⁴ Leblic (2003: 302).

³⁵ Mokaddem maintains moreover that 1975 represents '*la date décisive de la formulation du discours indépendantiste kanak.*' Mokaddem (2005a: 139).

³⁶ See Mokaddem (2005a); Trépied (2007).

³⁷ Trolue and Caihe (1995: 161). Caihe was involved in the organisation of *Mélanésie 2000*, particularly within the Kanak population: see *ibid.*, 153-154.

would have also presented a very high risk of alienating significant portions of the local population (both Kanak and non-Kanak), thereby defeating a number of its key objectives.

One clear illustration of this divergence of approaches is the highly critical position (in various cases translating into active opposition) voiced by the majority of the radical Kanak militants in relation to *Mélanésie 2000* itself.³⁸ Nevertheless, the ‘cultural’ and the ‘political’ can be seen to have overlapped and interconnected in the different approaches taken by Tjibaou and the radical Kanak groups during this period. For instance, one of the primary concerns of the *Foulards Rouges* and the *Groupe 1878* was the positive reaffirmation of Kanak culture and identity,³⁹ which was also at the heart of the *Mélanésie 2000* initiative.

Another important example relates to the appropriation, revalorisation and *revendication* initiated by the radical Kanak groups of the previously pejorative term ‘*canaque*’ (the orthography of which they changed to the invariable ‘*Kanak*’ from 1973), transformed into an ‘*emblème identitaire révolutionnaire*’.⁴⁰ The use of the term ‘*canaque*’ in the publications produced in 1974, 1975 and 1976 by the festival’s Organising Committee⁴¹ can be seen to demonstrate the progressive appropriation of this revalorised term by Kanak people more broadly.

³⁸ This is discussed further below.

³⁹ See in this connection Gabriel and Kermel (1985: 100-104). This is also illustrated by the position articulated by Nidoïsh Naisseline in an interview published by LC in July 1975, in which he clearly affirms that ‘*revendications d’ordre culturelles [sic] et en particulier lutter pour la reconnaissance des valeurs qui font qu’un peuple n’est pas comme les autres*’ represents ‘*un combat prioritaire*’ in contemporary New Caledonia: ‘M. NIDOISH NAISSELINE S’EXPLIQUE: «IL Y A AUTANT D’INDÉPENDANCES QU’IL Y A DE PAYS INDÉPENDANTS»’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 23, 10-16/07/1975, 3. Fote Trolue also emphasised the preoccupation with questions of Kanak cultural identity of the radical Kanak students still studying in France at the time of *Mélanésie 2000* in his 1995 ‘*témoignage*’: Trolue and Caihe (1995: 154-155).

⁴⁰ Mokaddem (2005a: 149).

⁴¹ The term ‘*canaque*’ appears alongside ‘*mélanésien*’ and ‘*autochtone*’ in *Mélanésie 2000*’s official Festival Program: Bonnabesse and Missotte (1975). The festival newspaper uses the term ‘*kanak*’ on numerous occasions, although this appears both in its invariable and variable forms, and the orthography ‘*canaque*’ also appears: see the newspaper’s three editions reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 79-101). The use and prominence of the term ‘*kanak*’ in the festival newspaper can be attributed to the involvement of LC in its production. As noted in the Introduction, this festival newspaper

The Organising Committee also used another term to refer to Kanak people collectively: ‘*Kanaké*’. *Kanaké* was the title of the *jeu scénique* performed on two occasions during *Mélanésie 2000*’s main festival⁴² and featured in the title of the 1976 book written by Tjibaou and Missotte.⁴³ ‘*Kanaké*’ is the name of the first man to have come into existence according to a particular ‘foundational myth’ and ‘genealogy’ from the ‘*aire linguistique paicî*’.⁴⁴ As highlighted by Bensa, there is no etymological or historical connection between, on the one hand, the term ‘*Kanaké*’, drawn here from the name of this figure in this particular Kanak foundational myth and, on the other, the term ‘*Kanak*’ as it had been used (in various orthographic variations) by Europeans to refer, generally pejoratively, to New Caledonia’s indigenous population from the early stages of contact and colonisation, originally drawn from a Polynesian word signifying ‘man’.⁴⁵ It was the latter term that had been the basis of the appropriation, revalorisation and *revendication* of the appellation ‘*canaque*’ (and then ‘*Kanak*’) by the radical Kanak student groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁴⁶

The choice to elevate the figure of *Kanaké* to a symbol of Kanak unity and socio-cultural identity by Tjibaou and *Mélanésie 2000*’s organisers reinforced this progressive appropriation of the term *Kanak* (particularly with that orthography) as a political

– the ‘*Journal du comité organisateur du festival Mélanésie 2000*’, entitled *Melanesia* – was produced in collaboration with LC, particularly involving LC’s Editor-in-Chief, Claude Nègre: Missotte (1985: 518). ‘*Canaque*’ is the orthography used in the book written by Tjibaou and Missotte and released a year after the festival: Tjibaou and Missotte (1978).

⁴² Dobbelaere and Tjibaou (1975).

⁴³ Tjibaou and Missotte (1978).

⁴⁴ The appropriation of the *Kanaké* figure from this particular myth is directly acknowledged by Tjibaou and Missotte in *Kanaké, Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie*: *ibid.*, 6, 42.

⁴⁵ Bensa (1995a: 297).

⁴⁶ Mokaddem (2005a: 149-150). As noted by Chanter, this appropriation ‘appears to have drawn inspiration from the corresponding appropriation of “*négre*” by African activists within the *Négritude* movement in Paris some time earlier’: Chanter (1996: 16). Bensa highlights that, ‘[e]n s’*autodésignant comme « kanak »*’ in the 1960s and 1970s, New Caledonia’s indigenous, colonised people transformed ‘*le stigmat en emblème*’ and placed ‘*la question coloniale au cœur de leur identité*.’ Footnote omitted, Bensa (2000: 8).

strategy engaged in relation to the Kanak community as a whole.⁴⁷ Bensa thus contends that, as appropriated by Tjibaou, '*Kanaké, l'aîné c'est-à-dire le plus ancien, est l'incarnation mythologique du droit naturel du peuple kanak à la souveraineté territoriale et à l'autorité politique.*'⁴⁸ This appropriation of the figure of *Kanaké* in the context of *Mélanésie 2000* clearly highlights the interplay between the actions of Tjibaou and *Mélanésie 2000*'s other organisers and the approach engaged by the radical Kanak groups during this period.

This interplay was highlighted by Tjibaou himself in an interview in 1984, in which he broadly acknowledged the significance of the analysis and engagement of these radical groups in contributing to the changing local context within which the organisation of *Mélanésie 2000* became a possibility.⁴⁹ Tjibaou's comments in this interview point to two key respects in which the impact of the anti-colonial discourse and actions of these radical groups gave rise to a favourable context for the *Mélanésie 2000* project. In the first instance, this impact relates to the willingness of certain actors within the formal political and administrative structures to support the festival project by reason of the increasingly conflictual political context in New Caledonia with the emergence of Kanak nationalism, resulting in a perceived need to engage in some kind of action in favour of the Kanak population.⁵⁰ In the second instance, Tjibaou identifies the actions of the radical groups as having rendered people within the Kanak community more

⁴⁷ Bensa (1995a: 297). Bensa maintains that: '[e]n 1976, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, qui ne s'est pas encore prononcé pour l'indépendance, est en chemin du C vers le K que les Mélanésien en lutte ont imposé quasi unilatéralement depuis peu': *ibid.*, 305, note 21.

⁴⁸ Footnote omitted, *ibid.*, 297.

⁴⁹ Tjibaou (1996: 152). Note that, according to Missotte, the booklet written, produced and sold during the main festival by *Mélanésie 2000*'s Organising Committee, entitled *Vers Mélanésie 2000*, imputed the contemporary Kanak '*renaissance*': '*aux jeunes qui ayant fait des études au loin sont revenus plus fiers d'être Kanak et que [sic] de leurs nouveaux acquis, faisant ainsi allusion à Jean-Marie Tjibaou mais aussi aux jeunes des groupes Foulards Rouges et à Nidoish Naisseline, [sic] leur fondateur.*' Missotte (1985: 482). This book was co-authored by Jean-Marie Tjibaou, Henry Azapunia, Jacques Iékawé, Basil Citre and Philippe Missotte himself.

⁵⁰ Tjibaou (1996: 152).

receptive to the festival project and its message, thereby potentially also rendering the festival more successful in advancing a number of its key objectives.⁵¹

Mélanésia 2000 itself defies any distinction between the ‘cultural’ and the ‘political’.⁵² The festival initiative was given a particular political character by reason of its having had a certain level of government support and having been organised within the formal structure of the State administration, funded and supported by various (local and national) parts of that administration. Furthermore, as noted above, although *Mélanésia 2000* was presented by its organisers (as well as by its local conservative political supporters and by the local conservative written press⁵³) during its preparation and realisation as a ‘cultural’ event, the festival’s objectives and key message (as they were formulated by the Organising Committee and variously conveyed to the participants, the spectators and the New Caledonian public at large) were implicitly inscribed in an inherently political project – a particular politics of Kanak culture and identity.

This is apparent even from the initial presentation of the festival project by Tjibaou in a text that was included in the original ‘*dossier*’ or ‘*plaque de présentation*’ produced in 1974 by the festival’s organisers to promote the initiative.⁵⁴ An adapted but broadly similar text, including large sections taken directly from Tjibaou’s 1974 text, signed by Tjibaou as the President of the festival’s Organising Committee, also appeared at the beginning of the official Festival Program.⁵⁵ Consequently, essentially the same

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Moreover, as affirmed by Guiart: ‘[i]l n’existe nulle part d’action culturelle divorcée de l’action politique. Pas plus en France d’ailleurs où la culture fournit un des moyens de l’action du jacobinisme de l’État.’ Guiart (1996: 92).

⁵³ See the discussion below.

⁵⁴ According to Tjibaou and Missotte, this original ‘*dossier*’ was particularly aimed at the ‘*autorités territoriales et nationales dont nous sollicitons le concours*’: Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 31-32). Tjibaou’s text is reproduced in Missotte (1995b: 66-69); and Tjibaou (1996: 31-33).

⁵⁵ Jean-Marie Tjibaou, ‘Présentation par J.M. Tjibaou, Président du Comité’, in Bonnabesse and Missotte (1975: 5-6).

objectives of the festival as those expressed in this initial 1974 document were conveyed directly to the main festival's participants and spectators in September 1975.⁵⁶

In this initial 1974 text, Tjibaou represents *Mélanésie 2000* as a means of conducting the 'inventaire' of contemporary Kanak culture and way of life necessary for their valorisation and perpetuation.⁵⁷ The festival is also represented as a means for Kanak individuals to 'redécouvrir' their identity, their self-confidence, dignity and pride, and consequently to free themselves from the so-called 'psychological inferiority complex' their position as a colonised people is posited by Tjibaou to have engendered.⁵⁸

Another, interrelated objective attributed by Tjibaou to the *Mélanésie 2000* is: 'permettre au groupe européen ainsi qu'aux minorités ethniques du Territoire, de voir, de connaître et peut-être reconnaître la culture autochtone'.⁵⁹ This 'reconnaissance du monde ambiant' of Kanak culture as the indigenous culture of New Caledonia is represented as necessary both for the continued existence of Kanak culture and for the future harmony of New Caledonia as a whole.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ A large, slightly modified passage taken from Tjibaou's introductory text in the Festival Program was also reproduced in the 1976 book written by Tjibaou and Missotte, although the passage quoted is identified as having been taken from Tjibaou's 1974 text: Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 31-32).

⁵⁷ Tjibaou in Missotte (1995b: 67).

⁵⁸ In this text, Tjibaou does not expressly refer to colonisation. However, his explanation of the contemporary psychological and social condition of Kanak people in reference to certain historical processes clearly relates to their colonisation and religious conversion: see Tjibaou in Missotte (1995b: 67). Moreover, Tjibaou's understanding articulated in this text of the contemporary psychological, material and symbolic situation of Kanak people within the broader New Caledonian context – the 'crise d'identité' being experienced by Kanak people collectively, as he would later call it (Tjibaou (1996: 151)) – as well as the concrete means advocated to combat this situation (embodied in *Mélanésie 2000* itself) arguably draws on the work of authors such as Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi in relation to the 'colonial condition'. Fanon's influence on Tjibaou's thought in relation to *Mélanésie 2000* appears to have been implicitly acknowledged by Tjibaou himself in an interview in 1984: Tjibaou (1996: 152). The influence of Fanon and Memmi on Tjibaou's reflection is also suggested by Mokaddem (2005a: 126). The work of Fanon and Memmi may well have been among the analytical tools and frames of reference acquired by Tjibaou during his tertiary studies in Metropolitan France, which informed the nature of his initial, 'socio-cultural' engagement in favour of the decolonisation of Kanak people subsequent to his definitive return to New Caledonia in 1971 and culminating in *Mélanésie 2000*.

⁵⁹ Tjibaou in Missotte (1995b: 67). Thus, Tjibaou states: '[I]a motivation profonde de ce festival est la foi en la possibilité d'instaurer un dialogue plus profond et plus suivi entre la culture européenne et la culture autochtone.'

⁶⁰ Ibid.

In this perspective, *Mélanésie 2000* and the recognition of the uniqueness of Kanak culture and its special relationship to New Caledonia, being the ‘*culture originelle du pays*’, are represented by Tjibaou as constituting the first, prerequisite step in a broader cultural project and social process encompassing all of the different cultural communities established in New Caledonia. Indeed, Tjibaou proposes the organisation of another festival (later called ‘*Calédonia 2000*’) in 1980, to constitute the meeting from which ‘*une culture nouvelle calédonienne*’ could be born, through ‘*la reconnaissance (RE-NAÎTRE-AVEC) réciproque des deux cultures dans ce qu’elles ont de spécifique*.’⁶¹

Thus, Tjibaou affirms in this 1974 text: ‘[j]e me permets en effet de faire le rêve qu’en l’an 2000, le profil culturel du Calédonien comportera aussi bien des éléments de la culture européenne que de la culture mélanésienne.’⁶² However, Tjibaou also firmly states that only Kanak culture is capable of infusing any broader, ‘New Caledonian culture’ with ‘*la « coloration » et la senteur du territoire calédonien*.’⁶³ This emphasis on the need for the country’s non-Kanak population to recognise Kanak culture specifically as the country’s indigenous culture is particularly significant in terms of the tacit political implications of the *Mélanésie 2000* project.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid. As suggested by its name, *Mélanésie 2000*, the primary focus and emphasis of this first festival was the country’s Kanak or ‘*Mélanésien*’ population, and projecting and engendering a particular socio-political situation and cultural identity for that population in the future (represented by the reference to the year 2000). The particular orthography used – a hybrid between the English ‘Melanesia’ and the French ‘*Mélanésie*’ – could be seen to have certain political implications given the way it highlights the Kanak population’s links and proximity to the (predominantly Anglophone) Pacific region and other (now independent) Melanesian countries and indigenous peoples, rather than to the colonial power, France. Note that in some of the documents produced by the Organising Committee the festival’s name was printed as ‘*melanesia 2000*’ or ‘*MELANESIA 2000*’. However, on most occasions this orthography without accents appears to have resulted from typographical choices, particularly in headlines, and the festival is referred to as ‘*Mélanésie 2000*’ in the majority of cases in the body of these documents’ texts.

⁶³ Tjibaou in Missotte (1995b: 67).

⁶⁴ Note that Tjibaou’s call in this 1974 text for the recognition of Kanak indigeneity was also stressed by the Organising Committee in its text of introduction published in *Mélanésie 2000*’s Festival Program, (Le Comité, ‘*Présentation par le Comité*’, in Bonnabes and Missotte (1975: 7)) and was conveyed and enacted theatrically during the main festival in its *jeu scénique*. See the discussion below.

In her account of the formation of colonial identities in New Caledonia and the nature of the salient social cleavages still persisting between certain groups according to their respective 'cultures', Isabelle Merle identifies as an '*enjeu crucial d'identité*' for '*les « Blancs »*': '*la défense de valeurs dites « civilisées » contre un monde « sauvage », le monde kanak.*'⁶⁵ In the light of this historical context, the need expressed by Tjibaou for the recognition by Kanak people themselves and by the country's 'European' population of the positive, unique and legitimate character of Kanak culture and identity – that is, for '*le canaque*' to be invited '*à venir au banquet des civilisations, non en mendiant déculturé mais en homme libre*'⁶⁶ – can be seen to have particular social significance. It necessarily implies the radical transformation of the contemporary perception and constitution of both Kanak and local 'European' identity, and consequently also implies the radical transformation of the entrenched socio-cultural cleavages between these groups, based thereon.⁶⁷

It is also worth highlighting that engendering Kanak (cultural and/or political) unity is not identified by Tjibaou in this 1974 text as one of *Mélanésie 2000*'s objectives. Rather, Kanak cultural (and perhaps implicitly, by extension, political) unity is effectively posited and treated as a given in this text, in large part by reason of Tjibaou's identification of a set of broadly shared or collective past and present experiences of marginalisation and domination and by reason of the particular status shared by Kanak as the country's indigenous people, in contrast to the country's non-Kanak inhabitants. Engendering Kanak unity was, however, affirmed as one of *Mélanésie 2000*'s objectives in the official Festival Program and the festival newspaper, as well as in some of the public discourses pronounced by *Mélanésie 2000*'s Kanak organisers during the regional mini-festivals and the September main festival.

⁶⁵ Merle (1995: 403); and see *ibid.*, 404.

⁶⁶ Tjibaou in Missotte (1995b: 67).

⁶⁷ This perspective and conclusion are confirmed by various comments made by Tjibaou in subsequent years, including particularly his statement in 1988 that, '*dans l'univers où ils [les petits Caldoches] ont évolué, la revendication kanak a constitué pour eux la fin du monde, la remise en cause fondamentale de ce qu'ils ont acquis, et peut-être de ce qu'ils sont... de qui ils sont !*' Tjibaou (1996: 289).

Tjibaou concludes his 1974 text with the following statement: ‘[L]’*espoir qui sous-tend ce projet est grand... Nous devons, ENSEMBLE, le réaliser pour l’avenir culturel de notre jeunesse et la santé de notre pays.*’⁶⁸ This insistence on the necessity for the future ‘health’ of the country as a whole of achieving *Mélanésie 2000*’s objectives through engaging its socio-cultural project echoes another, somewhat stronger statement earlier in this text, according to which ‘[L]’*a non-reconnaissance qui crée l’insignifiance et l’absence de dialogue culturel ne peut amener qu’au suicide ou à la révolte.*’⁶⁹ This phrase is the most explicitly ‘political’ passage to appear in this text. It was later reproduced as part of Tjibaou’s introductory text in the Festival Program⁷⁰ and was quoted on the first page of the first edition of the main festival’s official newspaper.⁷¹

The Organising Committee’s ‘*démarche coutumière*’

One of the most lengthy, complex and important elements of the preparation needed to realise the *Mélanésie 2000* festival project was the festival’s inscription within Kanak ‘customary’ networks and modalities. The ‘*démarche coutumière*’ engaged in relation to the festival is, moreover, particularly significant when considering the political nature and implications of *Mélanésie 2000*, given that Kanak ‘custom’, understood as a shorthand designation for a mode of culturally embedded socio-political interaction, effectively condenses the ‘cultural’ and the ‘political’.

⁶⁸ Tjibaou in Missotte (1995b: 67, 69).

⁶⁹ Ibid., 67.

⁷⁰ Jean-Marie Tjibaou, ‘Présentation par J.M. Tjibaou, Président du Comité’, in Bonnabesse and Missotte (1975: 6).

⁷¹ *Mélanésie : journal du festival*, no. 1, September 1975, 1, reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 79).

Trépiéd speaks in this connection of Kanak '*répertoires vernaculaires du politique*'.⁷² In a similar vein, Mokaddem contends that in organising *Mélanésie 2000* and in his subsequent direct engagement in the political domain Tjibaou worked to '*reconstituer le lien politique kanak*'.⁷³ The particular conjunction of individuals and administrative, associative, political, religious and 'customary' structures and networks identified by the festival's organisers and various commentators as having given rise to and rendered possible the *Mélanésie 2000* project⁷⁴ are outlined in Annex 2, which also details the particular '*démarche coutumière*' adopted by the Organising Committee in realising the festival.

From the perspective of *Mélanésie 2000*'s organisers, the adoption of a '*démarche coutumière*' was an essential means of legitimising the event as a specifically Kanak cultural festival. As explained in Annex 2, the particular '*démarche coutumière*' engaged in the festival project was necessarily unique, by reason of the entirely novel contemporary situation constituted by such a pan-Kanak gathering and cultural festival event.⁷⁵ *Mélanésie 2000*'s organisers consequently worked to rearticulate Kanak 'custom' in such a way as to accommodate this new situation. The festival has, moreover, been identified by certain commentators as having effectively extended the existing 'customary' paths in producing a new sense or consciousness of pan-Kanak

⁷² Trépiéd (2007: 139, 774). In discussing Kanak '*répertoires vernaculaires du politique*', Trépiéd notes that he is both drawing on the perspective articulated by Romain Bertrand and following the tradition established by authors such as Alban Bensa, Jean-Claude Rivierre and Michel Naepels in relation to New Caledonia: *ibid.*, 774. This perspective is apparent in Mokaddem's treatment of Kanak 'sovereignty' and Naepels's work on Kanak '*accueil*' in the Houaïlou region, discussed in the Introduction of this thesis.

⁷³ Mokaddem (2005a: 123).

⁷⁴ Including particularly Kanak associations such as the *Mouvement féminin pour un souriant village mélanésien*, the *Association mélanésienne pour le développement économique, social et culturel* (AMEDESC), the *Union des Indigènes Calédoniens Amis de la Liberté dans l'Ordre* (UICALO) and the *Association des Indigènes Calédoniens et Loyaltiens Français* (AICLF).

⁷⁵ This dynamic conception of Kanak 'custom' can be seen to correlate to Tjibaou's approach to cultural 'authenticity' and identity, which he articulated in response to various criticisms of *Mélanésie 2000*. For, as discussed further below, Tjibaou defined cultural 'authenticity' and identity as inextricably linked to historical context and as changing through time: Tjibaou (1996: 42). This conception of 'authenticity' and the '*démarche coutumière*' adopted in organising and realising *Mélanésie 2000* can also be seen to relate to the broader inscription of the festival and its message and objectives into a long-term historical perspective, drawing from the past and the present with a view to the future, encompassing the country as a whole and '*interpellant*' all of its contemporary inhabitants, as similarly discussed below.

unity, itself identified as crucial to the subsequent Kanak political engagement in favour of independence.⁷⁶

A key role in relation to the main festival was accorded by *Mélanésie 2000*'s Organising Committee to the 'customary' representatives of the Kanak groups from '*le Sud*', who acted as the 'customary' '*maîtres de la terre*' in relation to the main-festival site. This key role is apparent in both the physical organisation of the main-festival site and in the structure of the inter-Kanak 'customary' ceremonies performed in relation to the main festival event.⁷⁷ Through this 'customary' inscription of the Kanak occupation of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main-festival site by means of the 'customary' *accueil* by the '*maîtres de la terre*' of the 'foreign' Kanak participant delegations and the festival's organisers, Kanak 'sovereignty' at a local level can be seen to have been directly enacted by the festival. Furthermore, during the festival's opening ceremony, all of the Kanak participants from throughout the archipelago were collectively represented by the representatives of '*le Sud*' in the 'customary' exchanges performed with the Organising Committee. A certain degree of socio-political Kanak unity was thus effectively realised through this 'customary' process, beyond the local level (relating specifically to the main-festival site and its 'customary' 'proprietors'), potentially prefiguring the symbolic representation of pan-Kanak unity and 'national' Kanak sovereignty in the *jeu scénique* (discussed further below).

On the other hand, the Kanak 'occupation' of the main-festival site en masse (notably associated with the construction of 'traditional' Kanak *cases* on the site, itself inscribed in 'customary' processes and exchanges) was never explicitly linked by the Festival's organisers to a dynamic of Kanak land *revendication*.⁷⁸ Rather than posing any such direct, radical challenge to the established status quo, the festival was organised with the official sanction of the local (and national) political and administrative authorities. Thus, the site on which the main festival took place was approved – indeed lent – by its

⁷⁶ These and certain competing views are discussed further in Annex 2.

⁷⁷ See the discussion in Annex 2.

⁷⁸ See the discussion in Annex 2 and below.

legal proprietor, the Municipality of Noumea. The festival's Organising Committee duly returned the (significantly improved) site to the Municipality after the festival's conclusion.⁷⁹

This does not, however, detract from the political nature and potential significance of the '*démarche coutumière*' engaged in and through *Mélanésie 2000*. This stems in the first instance from the Kanak understanding of 'custom' as a form of specifically Kanak politics, linked notably to Kanak modalities of indigeneity, sovereignty and unity. In the second instance, it stems from the implications of the mobilisation of such specifically Kanak '*répertoires vernaculaires du politique*' for 'politics' (conceived in a 'conventional' Western sense) in New Caledonia more broadly, especially given the emerging Kanak pro-independence political discourse at the time.

On the other hand, the degree to which the specifically political implications of the various 'customary' processes associated with the organisation and realisation of *Mélanésie 2000* were actually perceived by members of New Caledonia's Kanak or non-Kanak public is unclear (and remains contentious today).⁸⁰ Some light might be shed on this question by the analysis of the ways in which the different elements of *Mélanésie 2000*'s '*démarche coutumière*' and their political inscription and implications were discursively represented (or, alternatively, occluded) in the contemporaneous local written press coverage of the festival.

⁷⁹ Moreover, the land was returned despite the fact that some questions appear to have been raised by *Mélanésie 2000*'s Kanak participants after the conclusion of the main festival in relation to the possibility of their having certain persisting 'rights', including 'proprietary' rights, over the 'traditional' *cases* and the land on which they had been constructed by reason of the 'customary' processes through which they had been installed on the site, as discussed below.

⁸⁰ See the discussion in Annex 2.

Coverage of the '*démarche coutumière*' in the local written press

La France Australe and Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes

Both daily newspapers devoted considerable attention to *Mélanésie 2000* throughout the period of its preparation in 1974 and 1975,⁸¹ and during and immediately subsequent to the main festival itself in September 1975.⁸² As seen further below, both LFA and LNC tended overall to represent *Mélanésie 2000* and its objectives and significance in such a manner as to maintain its (at least superficial) congruence with the particular model of social 'consensus' discursively constructed by these two newspapers. Although there is a large degree of overlap in terms of the subject matter and content of the articles published on *Mélanésie 2000* by these daily newspapers, LNC's coverage throughout 1975 can in many respects be considered more comprehensive than that of its chief rival. Moreover, as indicated, for example, by the number of times items covering *Mélanésie 2000* appeared on the front page of the two daily newspapers in 1975, LNC can also be seen to have placed more emphasis on the festival.

While the involvement in the *Mélanésie 2000* project of various Kanak associations⁸³ was indicated and at times highlighted in the coverage of the festival published in 1974 and 1975 by the two dailies, the significance of this involvement in terms of the potential revalorisation and mobilisation of specifically Kanak '*répertoires*

⁸¹ Particular attention was paid to the regional mini-festivals and the preparations for the main festival.

⁸² Note that the broad tendency apparent in 1974 for LFA to give more prominence to *Mélanésie 2000* and to contain more comprehensive coverage on the festival project and its objectives in comparison to LNC is reversed in 1975. From July to December 1974 LFA published 6 articles primarily focused on *Mélanésie 2000*, 2 of which were signalled on the front page of the relevant editions. From January to the end of September 1975, this newspaper published 46 further articles of this kind, 11 of which were also signalled on the front page. This compares to 4 articles published by LNC in the same period in 1974, with 1 signalled on the front page, and 78 articles in 1975, 27 being signalled on the front page. Among the articles on *Mélanésie 2000* published by LNC, 6 appear in the daily, 'editorial-like' satirical column, '*Le Billet de l'Affreux Jojo*' (note that an official 'editorial' column only very rarely appears in this newspaper). There is no mention of the festival in LFA's regular '*Éditorial*', which focuses almost exclusively on international news and issues.

⁸³ Particularly the *Mouvement féminin pour un souriant village mélanésien*.

vernaculaires du politique' was not made apparent in that coverage.⁸⁴ Similarly, although several early articles published in 1974 by these newspapers included mention of the work being undertaken by the three Kanak '*animateurs*' in visiting Kanak communities throughout New Caledonia on behalf of the Organising Committee, the political nature and significance from a Kanak perspective of key aspects of that work, inscribed in the Organising Committee's '*démarche coutumière*', is not clearly apparent from, and is certainly not directly addressed or explained in, those articles.⁸⁵

However, it is important to note that the majority of the articles treating these subjects appear to have been substantially if not entirely based on information provided directly to the local press by the festival's Organising Committee itself, either in the form of written press releases or through press conferences.⁸⁶ As signalled in the Introduction, one of the primary concerns of *Mélanésie 2000*'s Organising Committee was the engagement of the local media in relation to the festival project as a means of facilitating its organisation and pursuing a number of its key objectives. One of the '*commissions de travail*' created within the Organising Committee was thus devoted to 'public relations' and relaying information to the media.⁸⁷ The Organising Committee's

⁸⁴ See, for example, 'MELANESIA 2000 – FESTIVAL D'EXPRESSION MÉLANÉSIENNE EN 1975', *La France Australe*, 17/07/1974, 9; 'Mme PIDJOT – MELANESIA 2000 : UNE IDÉE DU « MOUVEMENT FÉMININ POUR UN SOURRIANT VILLAGE MÉLANÉSIEN »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 18/06/1975, 9.

⁸⁵ See 'PRÉPARATION DU FESTIVAL MELANESIA 2000', *La France Australe*, 31/08-01/09/1974, 7; 'Le premier Festival des Arts mélanésien se prépare', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 31/08/1974, 6; 'MELANESIA 2000 – LA FRANCE ACCORDE 8.000.000 CFP pour la renaissance de la culture mélanésienne', *La France Australe*, 17/12/1974, 5; 'Pour promouvoir la Culture Mélanésienne – Le Festival des Arts Mélanésien en septembre 75', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/12/1974, 8.

⁸⁶ For example, information on the three '*animateurs*' appears in two sets of corresponding articles published in the daily newspapers. In the case of the first pair of articles, their text is identical, suggesting its reproduction from a press release: 'PRÉPARATION DU FESTIVAL MELANESIA 2000', *La France Australe*, 31/08-01/09/1974, 7; 'Le premier Festival des Arts mélanésien se prépare', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 31/08/1974, 6. In the case of the second pair of articles, the two newspapers are both reporting on the same press conference held by Tjibaou and Iékawé: 'MELANESIA 2000 – LA FRANCE ACCORDE 8.000.000 CFP pour la renaissance de la culture mélanésienne', *La France Australe*, 17/12/1974, 5; 'Pour promouvoir la Culture Mélanésienne – Le Festival des Arts Mélanésien en septembre 75', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/12/1974, 8.

⁸⁷ Missotte (1985: 440).

concerted engagement with the local media raises significant inter-textual and inter-discursive considerations, which are discussed further below.

The 'customary' inscription of *Mélanésie 2000*'s regional mini-festivals was indicated in the coverage of some of these events published by the two daily newspapers in a relatively incidental and often highly superficial manner.⁸⁸ On no instances is the political nature or implications of Kanak 'custom' identified or made apparent in this coverage. However, a number of the articles reporting on the mini-festivals do include direct quotations from the speeches made during the public 'customary' ceremonies held in relation to these events. These ceremonies provided a significant opportunity for the public articulation of the objectives and message of the *Mélanésie 2000* project in the presence of a large number of Kanak communities from certain areas of the archipelago.⁸⁹ The quotations reproduced from these speeches contain two particularly important themes relating to the collective 'survival' of Kanak people and culture into the future (within which the *Mélanésie 2000* project is broadly discursively inscribed): firstly, there is a repeated, if often implicit, emphasis on the link between the perpetuation through time of Kanak culture, 'custom' and identity, on the one hand, and the Kanak connection to '*la terre*', on the other, particularly through the use of the metaphor of '*racines*'; secondly, there is an emphasis on the need to show Kanak culture, 'custom' and identity to the 'non-Kanak' world.

⁸⁸ Note that LNC covered, in varying degrees of detail, seven of the mini-festivals (Lifou; '*Nord*' – Bondé; '*Sud*' – Yaté; Ouvéa; Maré; Koné; Canala), whereas LFA covered only five (Lifou; Ouvéa; Maré; Koné; Canala). While the coverage of the regional mini-festivals is somewhat piecemeal in both daily publications (particularly LFA), these regional events are nevertheless given some prominence in the two dailies. For example, 7 of the 14 articles directly covering the mini-festivals published by LNC are signalled on the front page of the paper; 6 of the 11 articles in the case of LFA. The daily newspapers can also be seen to have played a role in publicising and facilitating the mini-festivals, through the prior reproduction of the programs of these events. Large numbers of photographs tend to dominate both newspapers' reports on the mini-festivals (which, as discussed below, is also a significant feature of their coverage of the main festival in September), particularly in the case of LFA, which often contains little to no text to accompany, contextualise and 'explain' (or discursively frame) these images.

⁸⁹ Indeed, in an interview in 1977, Tjibaou affirmed that: '*[a]vec les mini-festivals, nous souhaitons que le public local ait son festival, et par là, qu'il soit sensibilisé. Nous sommes partis du principe que tout le monde ne pourrait pas y assister, et qu'il fallait absolument faire quelque chose pour les locaux. Sur ce plan-là, on a atteint notre but.*' Tjibaou (1996: 40).

For example, this dual emphasis is apparent in the extended quotation from Tjibaou's opening discourse at the Ouvéa mini-festival reproduced by LNC in its coverage of this event. According to the paper, this opening speech recalled '*les grandes lignes et le pourquoi de Mélanésie 2000*', and Tjibaou is cited as '*expliquant*' *Mélanésie 2000* as:

*une action commune dans laquelle nous voudrions que tous les mélanésiens [sic] se retrouvent pour partager la culture. Dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, celui qui ne parle pas, on lui marche dessus. Il faut que les jeunes soient comme les cocos qui, en tombant, restent au pied du cocotier pour qu'ils puissent prendre racine. Il ne faut pas que les cocos flottent dans le lagon et s'éparpillent. Nous sommes des hommes ayant une culture. Et cette culture, nous devons le montrer. Si nous ne le faisons pas, les gens croient que nous n'existons pas. Dans le temps, les enfants avaient le temps d'aller à l'école de la coutume. Maintenant, ils n'ont plus le temps.*⁹⁰

Tjibaou's emphasis on the need for Kanak people to collectively show their 'culture' to the 'non-Kanak' world so as to prevent their being 'trampled on' and, indeed, to prove their very existence echoes his earlier statements made in the 1974 initial document which explained the need for and objectives of the festival as being linked to persisting Kanak socio-cultural (and potentially, implicitly political) marginalisation and subordination. However, in this citation from Tjibaou's speech at the Ouvéa mini-

⁹⁰ 'LE MINI FESTIVAL D'OUVEA', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 08/07/1975, 16. Note that similar emphasis on the posited necessity for Kanak people to collectively affirm and show their culture and existence to the non-Kanak world is also apparent in several other quotations included in the same article from another speech delivered at the beginning of the Ouvéa mini-festival by Amédée Nahiet, who is identified by the newspaper as the '*Président du Comité à Ouvéa et animateur du festival pour les Loyauté*', having been one of *Mélanésie 2000*'s designated '*animateurs*': *ibid.*; Missotte (1995b: 71, footnote 59). Note also that in his subsequent commentary Missotte particularly highlights this speech made by Tjibaou at the Ouvéa mini-festival, which he characterises as having been '*un discours marquant sur la culture*'. The quotation given by Missotte varies slightly from those appearing in LNC. Missotte (1995b: 76). Parts of Tjibaou's speech appear to have been later incorporated into the text of the booklet *Vers Mélanésie 2000*, produced by the festival's Organising Committee and sold during the main festival. The opening sentence of this booklet is, moreover, cited by LFA in September as follows: '[I]l *Homme qui n'a pas de culture est comme un coco qui tombe dans la mer : il erre, stérile, au gré des océans, ballotté de rivages en rivages.*' '*Vers Mélanésie 2000*', *La France Australe*, 05/09/1975, 24. This passage is also quoted (translated into English) in Waddell (2008: 104).

festival neither the emphasis on Kanak indigeneity nor the link drawn (implicitly but relatively clearly) between this contemporary situation and colonisation by Tjibaou in his 1974 text are apparent. Consequently, the radical political implications and message of the festival project are not indicated in this speech as it is covered by LNC.⁹¹

The link implicit in the ‘*racines*’ metaphor between Kanak culture and identity and Kanak land, a link which has potentially radical implications in relation to the established status quo,⁹² is never articulated or acknowledged directly by LNC or LNC in their coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* in the period of its organisation and realisation.

In contrast, some of the issues in relation to land ownership stemming from the implications (from a Kanak perspective) of the ‘customary’ installation of *Mélanésie 2000*’s Kanak participant delegations on the main-festival site were treated by LFA (and by LJC)⁹³ subsequent to the conclusion of the main festival. However, this was not linked to the colonial history of Kanak dispossession and land alienation on the *Grande Terre* nor to any broader political implications or Kanak *revendications*, with the result that these potential, radical political implications remained largely obscured and were foreclosed and thus neutralised in the paper’s treatment of these issues.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Only passing reference is made by LFA in its coverage of the Ouvéa mini-festival to Tjibaou’s opening speech. ‘Samedi et dimanche – OUVEA ETAIT EN FETE POUR LE 4e MINI FESTIVAL MELANESIA’, *La France Australe*, 07/07/1975, 8; ‘Samedi et dimanche à Ouvéa, un public considérable a assisté au quatrième mini-festival MELANESIA 2000 : Ouvéa en fête a accueilli le 4^{ème} mini-festival – De notre envoyé spécial Etienne WAMO’, *La France Australe*, 07/07/1975, 8.

⁹² See the discussion in Annex 2.

⁹³ See ‘L’avocat du diable à cœur ouvert avec : Jean-Marie Tjibaou’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 4-5; and the discussion below. Note that while LNC raises the issue of the uncertain future of the ‘*installations*’ and facilities constructed on the main-festival site (identified as belonging to the Municipality of Noumea), including the Kanak *cases*, this newspaper does not mention the view attributed by LFA, LJC and Tjibaou himself to certain Kanak people involved in the festival that those *cases* now belonged ‘customarily’ to them. See ‘Que deviendra Mélanésie 2000’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/09/1975, 15. This issue is not raised in the coverage of the festival published by LC.

⁹⁴ Two days after the main festival’s conclusion, LFA poses the question as to what is to become of the ‘*installations*’ on the main-festival site. In its framing of this question, the newspaper expressly posits and affirms that, the site being on loan from the Municipality of Noumea, ‘*il est tout à fait normal qu’il lui revienne.*’ LFA then reproduces a quotation from Tjibaou to explain the issue, but prefaces this quotation with a statement effectively distancing Tjibaou from the view he explains therein, identified as ‘*le sentiment général qui s’est fait jour*’. This quotation runs as follows: ‘[c]hacune des tribus a été reçue coutumièrement par la région Sud [...]. Toujours coutumièrement, ces tribus ont été installées dans des

Based on the coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival published by the two dailies in the immediate lead up to and during this event in September 1975, as well as the coverage published in the three editions of the Organising Committee's own official festival newspaper, it appears that the Organising Committee did attempt to broadly explain to the public through the medium of the written press the signification within Kanak 'culture' of the 'customary' exchanges performed in relation to the main festival. However, the potential broader, specifically political implications of those 'customary' exchanges appear to have been left largely implicit by the Organising Committee,⁹⁵ and are certainly not made apparent in the coverage of the main festival published by the daily newspapers.⁹⁶ Relatively little discussion of and very few quotations from the speeches made during the main festival's public opening and closing ceremonies are included in this coverage.

zones où des gens de chez elles avaient construit des cases selon la coutume propre. Ces gens-là se considèrent donc comme coutumièrement chez eux en chacun des points soleils. Bien sûr, le terrain ne leur appartient pas, mais il a été cédé pour l'installation. Nous nous trouvons dans la même situation que dans les tribus : le terrain de réserve n'appartient pas à l'individu qui a construit la case, mais à toute la tribu. Voilà le dilemme : Si des gens de Hienghène veulent s'installer au point soleil de Hienghène, la coutume leur donnera raison, mais pas la loi. La question est posée. LFA makes no further comment on this issue, stating simply that the main-festival site could potentially be transformed into '*un grand parc de la coutume mélanésienne*', converting the current *points soleil* into '*ateliers d'artisanat mélanésien*'. 'M. JEAN-MARIE TJIBAOU, PRESIDENT DU COMITE ORGANISATEUR « MELANESIA 2000 A DEPASSÉ TOUTES NOS ESPÉRANCES »', *La France Australe*, 09/09/1975, 5.

⁹⁵ This is most directly apparent through the treatment of these 'customary' ceremonies in the official festival newspaper – see particularly 'CÉRÉMONIE D'OUVERTURE DU FESTIVAL : La parole n'est pas tombée...', *Mélanesia : journal du festival*, no. 1, September 1975, 3, reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 81); 'CÉRÉMONIE D'OUVERTURE DU FESTIVAL', *Mélanesia : journal du festival*, no. 1, September 1975, 4, reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 82); 'L'accueil. Le sud reçoit', *Mélanesia : journal du festival*, no. 3, September 1975, 2, reproduced in (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 96).

⁹⁶ See the principal coverage of the 'customary' ceremonies associated with the main festival included in the following articles: '1.600 ACTEURS A MELANESIA 2000 AU DEBUT DE LA SEMAINE PROCHAINE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 28/08/1975, 23; 'MELANESIA 2000 LE FESTIVAL DES ARTS MELANESIENS – Le programme détaillé sera publié chaque jour dans la presse', *La France Australe*, 28/08/1975, 5; 'MELANESIA 2000 – Les réceptions coutumières ont commencé', *La France Australe*, 02/09/1975, 24; 'A MELANESIA 2000 – La Chefferie du Sud a accueilli les tribus de toute la Calédonie', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 03/09/1975, 19; 'PLUS DE 6.000 PERSONNES A LA CEREMONIE D'OUVERTURE DE MELANESIA 2000', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/09/1975, 4; 'MELANESIA 2000 – c'était hier l'ouverture', *La France Australe*, 04/09/1975, 18; 'Ce n'est qu'un au revoir', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/09/1975, 5. Note also the citations from 'M. Wamytan', identified as a '*membre du conseil des anciens de la tribu de Saint-Louis*', in 'M. JEAN-MARIE TJIBAOU, PRESIDENT DU COMITE ORGANISATEUR « MELANESIA 2000 A DEPASSÉ TOUTES NOS ESPÉRANCES »', *La France Australe*, 09/09/1975, 4-5.

As is the case for all of the print-media texts treated in this Chapter (and, indeed, this thesis), given the interconnections and overlap between the discourses of the Organising Committee and those articulated in the daily newspapers, inter-textual and inter-discursive considerations are particularly important for an analysis of these articles and their global failure to indicate or treat the political nature and potential political significance of the '*démarche coutumière*' being engaged in the festival.

Considering firstly the discourse of the festival's Kanak organisers in dealing with the local media, in the light of the early articles published in 1974 on the festival's organisation and preparation, the overall tendency of the Organising Committee appears at that time to have been not to highlight the nature or significance of these aspects of *Mélanésie 2000*'s organisation as 'political' in any respect. It seems likely that this discursive strategy was necessitated by the broader New Caledonian political context and the consequent need to distance the festival project in the public domain from that political context to allow for its realisation.⁹⁷

This discursive strategy might be contrasted to the frequent affirmation in the public discourse of *Mélanésie 2000*'s organisers of the need to show and explain Kanak 'culture' and 'custom' to the non-Kanak world, so as to enable its '*reconnaissance*' and ensure the future harmony and peaceful development of (the now multi-ethnic) New Caledonian society. As seen above, this objective was stressed in Tjibaou's 1974 text and featured in the speeches pronounced by the organisers of the mini-festivals. It was also emphasised by Tjibaou and Missotte in *Kanaké, Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie*, who identify *Mélanésie 2000* as having been aimed at counteracting the long-standing 'European' '*scepticisme et [...] dénégations aussi convaincues que convaincantes sur l'existence d'une culture réelle du monde mélanésien.*'⁹⁸ Tjibaou and Missotte link such scepticism or outright denials to the colonial discourse and conviction that the Kanak 'race' was on the path to an imminent and inevitable

⁹⁷ See the discussion above and below.

⁹⁸ Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 10).

extinction.⁹⁹ Tjibaou and Missotte also make the link to certain long-established strategies of Kanak survival in the colonial context, involving the concealment of aspects of Kanak life and society from the ‘outside world’.¹⁰⁰ Persisting denials in relation to the contemporary existence of Kanak ‘culture’ were consequently intended by *Mélanésie 2000*’s organisers to be countered through the public demonstration of ‘traditional rites’ and various other aspects of Kanak ‘culture’ and ‘tradition’ in and through the festival project.¹⁰¹

The Organising Committee’s apparent attempts to highlight and broadly explain to the public the meaning and significance within Kanak ‘culture’ of the necessary ‘customary’ exchanges performed in relation to the September main festival is clearly in keeping with this overall aim. Nevertheless, parts of *Mélanésie 2000* were deliberately kept ‘private’ (including the majority of the associated inter-Kanak ‘customary’ ceremonies) and the ‘explanations’ and ‘performances’ of Kanak ‘culture’ and ‘custom’

⁹⁹ Ibid. This perspective was also subsequently articulated by Bensa, as discussed in the Introduction.

¹⁰⁰ Tjibaou and Missotte thus affirm that the ‘Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie’ had hidden their ‘traditional rites’ ‘à la fois aux Européens qui ne pouvaient les considérer que comme des pratiques sauvages et aux missionnaires qui les avaient interdits comme idolâtres et qu’ils ne pouvaient contredire de peur de ne plus être défendus par eux contre les tracasseries de l’Administration coloniale.’ Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 10). It should be noted that the apparent initial reluctance of certain Kanak individuals and communities to accept the *Mélanésie 2000* project and participate therein has been identified as stemming from the perception of the performance (in either the sense of executing or the sense of reproducing theatrically) of certain elements of Kanak ‘custom’ to (non-Kanak) ‘outsiders’ as itself constituting a breach of ‘custom’: see for example Cawidrone (1995: 142). This reluctance could itself be connected to the strategies of Kanak survival in contexts of inter-group conflict, including in particular the strategic concealment of Kanak ‘culture’ in the colonial context.

¹⁰¹ This was also identified as the objective of the subsequent publication in 1976 of *Kanaké, Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie*. In his preface to that publication, Tjibaou indicates that ‘[l]’objectif de ce livre est d’informer’ and affirms that, ‘[p]ar ce livre, nous voulons relancer le dialogue pour la construction de notre pays. Nous voulons proclamer notre existence culturelle. Nous voulons dire au monde que nous ne sommes pas des rescapés de la Préhistoire, encore moins des vestiges archéologiques, mais des hommes de chair et de sang.’ Tjibaou (1978: 5). In an interview in September 1988, Tjibaou characterised the objectives of the *Mélanésie 2000* festival in very similar terms and posits that those objectives were shared collectively by all of the event’s Kanak participants, stating: ‘[l]’expérience de *Mélanésie 2000* a été formidable, parce que c’était la première fois que deux mille Kanaks se rencontraient sur Nouméa pour dire ensemble qu’ils ne sont pas seulement les vestiges d’une race en voie de disparition, mais qu’ils sont fondamentalement présents, et avec une volonté de construire l’avenir, de partager l’avenir en apportant leur savoir à la vie moderne.’ Tjibaou (1996: 284).

offered to the general public were highly selective and filtered.¹⁰² The different parts of *Mélanésie 2000* – particularly its ‘public’ and ‘private’ ‘customary’ aspects – consequently comprised and displayed different elements of Kanak ‘culture’ and ‘custom’, and were perceived in different ways by Kanak and non-Kanak participants and spectators. Leaving implicit in their dealings with the local press and the broader New Caledonian public the specific, inter-Kanak (and by extension the broader, inter-ethnic) political implications of the Kanak ‘customary’ exchanges and overall ‘*démarche coutumière*’ associated with *Mélanésie 2000* could consequently also be a reflection of their effective (and still inherently strategic) classification as part of the ‘private’, inter-Kanak aspect of the festival project.

Considering the discourse of the two daily newspapers and the absence in their coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* of any indication or treatment of the political nature and potential significance of the Organising Committee’s ‘*démarche coutumière*’, it is possible that the precise nature and significance from a Kanak perspective of the festival’s inscription in Kanak ‘custom’, and the resulting broader political character of the Organising Committee’s ‘*démarche coutumière*’ and the festival project, was generally relatively opaque to the regard of these (‘European’-dominated) newspapers.¹⁰³ Alternatively, or additionally, this absence could itself reflect a discursive strategy of occlusion working towards the negation of the concretisation of the politics of Kanak culture and identity

¹⁰² Indeed, in December 1974, Tjibaou was quoted by LNC as stating in a press conference in relation to the festival project: ‘[o]n nous a accusé de vendre, de profaner et de violer la coutume mélanésienne mais il ne faut pas être dupe : ça ne peut pas être réellement « la coutume » qui sera offerte au public, le festival est dans un sens « artificiel ». En fait, l’objectif n’est pas de montrer la vie, mais le cadre.’ ‘Pour promouvoir la Culture Mélanésienne – Le Festival des Arts Mélanésiens en septembre 75’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/12/1974, 8. The corresponding article in LFA includes a different quotation from Tjibaou, according to which he stated in this connection that: ‘[o]n nous accusera sans doute de profaner une certaine culture. Evidemment, le spectacle donné péchera par son côté artificiel dont nous ne sommes pas dupes, mais n’est-ce pas en profondeur que le travail véritable aura été accompli sur les données de la culture mélanésienne ?’ ‘MELANESIA 2000 – LA FRANCE ACCORDE 8.000.000 CFP pour la renaissance de la culture mélanésienne’, *La France Australe*, 17/12/1974, 5.

¹⁰³ This view is potentially confirmed by Mokaddem’s commentary, according to which ‘[l]es gestes « coutumiers » entre tous les pays kanak permirent des tissages de liens sociaux que ne pouvait voir un « européen ». Philippe Missotte, pourtant inclus dans le Comité organisateur, ne vit pas cette face cachée des choses [...]’. Mokaddem (2005a: 137).

being engaged in and through the festival project, in this instance by means of and as embodied in *Mélanésie 2000*'s '*démarche coutumière*'.

In this connection it is worth considering LNC's discursive construction of Kanak 'custom' in its coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* through two particularly telling examples. The first example is drawn from an article published by this newspaper in relation to the Yaté mini-festival for the Southern region of the *Grande Terre*.¹⁰⁴ This brief article focuses on Scholastique Pidjot and the involvement of the *Mouvement féminin pour un souriant village mélanésien* in the *Mélanésie 2000* project.¹⁰⁵ Apparently drawing on Scholastique Pidjot's own discourse, LNC affirms that '*« Mélanésie 2000 » n'est pas, comme certains le pensent, « une pièce de théâtre »*',¹⁰⁶ implying that the festival has a more 'authentic', 'real' or 'immediate' character than Western-style theatre. The newspaper goes on to identify *Mélanésie 2000* as a '*présentation de la coutume, en public*'.¹⁰⁷ In support of these statements, the paper quotes directly from Scholastique Pidjot as follows: '*« [n]ous ne voulons pas faire quelque chose d'extraordinaire, nous voulons quelque chose qui plaise aux Mélanésiens »*'.¹⁰⁸

Kanak 'custom' is not positively defined in this text. Nor is there any elaboration on what it might be that '*plaise aux Mélanésiens*'. Consequently, a discursive void is created, to be filled with the reader's own preconceived ideas, beliefs and society's dominant (positive and negative) stereotypes about what constitutes Kanak 'custom' and the nature of its significance (or insignificance), as well as about what might 'please

¹⁰⁴ 'Mme PIDJOT – MELANESIA 2000 : UNE IDEE DU « MOUVEMENT FEMININ POUR UN SOURRIANT VILLAGE MELANESIEN »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 18/06/1975, 9.

¹⁰⁵ Note that Scholastique and her husband lived in the '*tribu*' of La Conception, situated close to Noumea, and were consequently particularly involved in this mini-festival.

¹⁰⁶ 'Mme PIDJOT – MELANESIA 2000 : UNE IDEE DU « MOUVEMENT FEMININ POUR UN SOURRIANT VILLAGE MELANESIEN »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 18/06/1975, 9.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. Note that the representation of *Mélanésie 2000* attributed to Scholastique Pidjot in this quotation can be directly contrasted to the view expressed by Tjibaou in an interview in 1977: Tjibaou (1996: 40-41). In numerous respects *Mélanésie 2000*'s organisers appear to have aimed precisely at creating an event which was out of the ordinary as a means of more effectively communicating their message to the country's Kanak and non-Kanak populations and as a means of advancing and realising the festivals various objectives.

Melanesians' in the context of this event, represented as being organised principally by and for Kanak people. References to Kanak 'custom' in LNC's coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* (and, indeed, those in the coverage of LFA) predominantly follow this mould.¹⁰⁹

In this article the festival's transformatory objectives and implications for New Caledonian society as a whole are occluded and Kanak social and cultural marginalisation is, in effect, discursively maintained and reinforced. The final sentence of this article represents the festival as evidence of the posited progressive, (Western) liberal and egalitarian character of contemporary New Caledonian society, considered from the perspective of current internationally recognised norms, given the fact that the festival project had originally been conceived by a local women's group and that it was taking place in the International Women's Year.¹¹⁰ *Mélanésie 2000*, conceived as a Kanak event produced by and for Kanak people, is thus nevertheless discursively constructed in this article as an event taking place within, being congruent with and, indeed, promoting and strengthening the dominant Western liberal social, cultural and political model and system of values and norms established in contemporary New Caledonia.

The second example is LNC's discursive construction of Kanak 'custom' as a-political in a key article published on the day after the main festival's conclusion.¹¹¹ In this article, *Mélanésie 2000* is identified as a Kanak project which had been '*annoncé comme devant être une présentation, une explication de la coutume aux « Blancs »*.'¹¹² LNC also firmly discursively delimits *Mélanésie 2000* as a 'purely cultural', 'a-

¹⁰⁹ This can also be seen to conform to and confirm Tjibaou's statements in 1985 that: '[I]a coutume, [...] c'est le nom quelquefois un peu méprisant que les non-Kanaks donnent à ce que font les Kanaks. C'est pour eux une manière de dire qu'ils ne comprennent rien à cet ensemble de choses.' Tjibaou (1996: 202); and see *ibid.*, 153.

¹¹⁰ The newspaper states: '*il est intéressant de noter que « l'année de la Femme » n'est pas un vain mot en Nouvelle Calédonie.*' 'Mme PIDJOT – MELANESIA 2000 : UNE IDEE DU « MOUVEMENT FEMININ POUR UN SOURIAnt VILLAGE MELANESIEN »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 18/06/1975, 9.

¹¹¹ 'EXTRAORDINAIRE REUSSITE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/09/1975, 4.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

political' event.¹¹³ The newspaper consequently also implicitly discursively constructs Kanak 'custom' as 'purely cultural', 'a-political' and almost exclusively of relevance and significance to Kanak people, thereby foreclosing any understanding or recognition of 'custom' as a legitimate, meaningful and/or significant political system and mode of socio-political interaction, and consequently foreclosing its potential broader political relevance and implications. The seemingly widely-held understanding of Kanak 'custom' as 'a-political' 'culture' apparent in non-Kanak public discourse at this time can be seen to have facilitated the neutralisation of the potentially 'subversive' (from the perspective of the established status quo) aspects of *Mélanésie 2000* and its 'customary' inscription by newspapers such as LNC and LFA in their coverage of the event.

Le Journal Calédonien

This conservative, right-wing weekly paper contains the least coverage of the festival of all of the newspapers considered in this study.¹¹⁴ During the period prior to the main festival, *Mélanésie 2000* is virtually entirely absent from the pages of LJC. In the few articles that did appear during this period there is no mention of the Organising Committee's '*démarche coutumière*'.

LJC effectively explained and justified its general lack of coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* in an article published on the day of the main festival's official public opening in the following terms:

[d]epuis plusieurs mois, malgré la large publicité assurée par la presse écrite et parlée, les préparatifs de Mélanésie 2000 n'ont suscité qu'un intérêt mineur. Pour la majorité des Européens, Wallisiens, Tahitiens ou

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ LJC published a total of only 8 articles primarily focused on the festival and 4 articles in which reference is made to the festival in some minor way.

*autres de ce Territoire, ce n'était qu'une super-kermesse organisée par et pour des Mélanésiens.*¹¹⁵

This view (which was subsequently further affirmed in the paper's coverage of the main festival) and LJC's consequent minimal (and, indeed, seemingly purposefully minimising) coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* demonstrate the overarching perspective of this paper in relation to events, matters and issues identified as being specifically or exclusively of concern to Kanak people, which are effectively treated as irrelevant and insignificant in the discourse of this publication.

In keeping with this general perspective, the '*démarche coutumière*' adopted by the festival's organisers, the various 'customary' exchanges which took place in preparation of and during the mini-festivals and the main festival, and the significance of *Mélanésie 2000* arising from its inscription in Kanak 'customary' understandings, networks and modalities, are virtually entirely occluded in LJC's coverage of the festival. The same considerations discussed above in relation to the absence of any identification or discussion of the political nature and potential implications of *Mélanésie 2000*'s '*démarche coutumière*' in the coverage of the two daily newspapers is also broadly applicable here.

One notable exception to the absence of any treatment of the festival organisers' '*démarche coutumière*' and its potential broader implications appears in an interview with Tjibaou published by LJC subsequent to the festival's conclusion, in which the paper raises the issue of the future use and, effectively, the 'ownership' of the '*installations*' on the main-festival site.¹¹⁶ LJC frames its question to Tjibaou on this issue in the following terms:

[c]ertains Mélanésiens pensent que du moment que les délégations ont pris coutumièrement possession des cases, elles sont en droit, toujours

¹¹⁵ Jean GOTT VALLES, 'FAUT-IL CRAINDRE MELANESIA 2000 ?', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 81, 03-09/09/1975, 5.

¹¹⁶ 'L'avocat du diable à cœur ouvert avec : Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 4-5.

*coutumièrement, de considérer qu'elles leur appartiennent. Si les Mélanésien(ne)s veulent que les Européens respectent leur coutume, il faut qu'eux-mêmes respectent les coutumes des Blancs ; or, la coutume chez les Européens est de rendre ce qui a été prêté. Quel est votre sentiment à ce sujet ?*¹¹⁷

A certain degree of equality appears superficially to be constructed by LJC between Kanak 'coutume' and 'European' 'coutume' in this passage. However, the central proposition, that if Kanak people want their 'coutume' to be recognised by 'Europeans' they must recognise 'European' 'coutume', at once presupposes and strengthens the entrenched dominance of 'European' (so-called) 'coutume' in contemporary New Caledonia, the colonial origin of which is also discursively occluded. The position implicitly articulated by the paper in this question is that, where a direct conflict exists between these two so-called 'coutumes', 'European' 'coutume' automatically and necessarily prevails. It could also be argued that the designation of what is actually a legal norm as 'European' 'coutume' allows the paper to avoid explicitly recognising Kanak 'coutume' as an equivalent, 'external' and legitimate legal system in its own right.

Tjibaou replies to LJC's question by stating firstly: '[c]e problème est très intéressant. Il faut le poser aux juristes pour essayer de trouver une solution. Cela peut être un test.'¹¹⁸ Tjibaou thus clearly identifies and posits this issue as one of a conflict of specifically legal norms. However, the legitimacy of the French legal system in New Caledonia is not placed into question by Tjibaou in his response. Rather, as in the case of the legally recognised and constituted Kanak 'tribus' or 'reserves', which give rise to specific Kanak legal rights in relation to certain designated Kanak lands under French law (and in relation to which Kanak 'coutume' is also legally recognised and given effect in particular contexts under French law), the question is posed as one internal to

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

the established (French) juridical order, the legitimacy of which is left broadly unchallenged. Moreover, Tjibaou goes on to affirm:

*[e]n ce qui concerne le comité, le problème est clair : la Municipalité nous a prêté le terrain pour une manifestation précise. On peut discuter avec elle des possibilités d'animation future du site, mais c'est tout.*¹¹⁹

In his response to this question, Tjibaou clearly discursively represents *Mélanésie 2000* as having been inscribed within (and consequently, as non-threatening to) the established juridical order in contemporary New Caledonia. The potential broader, political implications of the festival's inscription in a '*démarche coutumière*' are certainly not made apparent in this paper's coverage of this issue.

Moreover, as in the discourse of LNC, Kanak 'custom' is constructed in LJC's coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* as a-political. Indeed, in the main article covering the main festival published by this paper just after that event (the authorship of which is expressly attributed to the paper's Kanak correspondent for '*la brousse*', Guièdre Wamedjo),¹²⁰ Kanak 'custom' and the more 'fundamental' aspects of Kanak socio-cultural 'difference' (from the posited 'European'/French/Western norm) are not only represented as being at odds with the 'modern' world and with French citizenship, but are represented as ultimately being dispensable in the future.¹²¹

In this article, *Mélanésie 2000* is represented as having been designed to permit '*le Mélanésien*'

par un départ basé sur le folklore de savoir qu'il existe en tant qu'individu avec des responsabilités de société et qu'une fois cette

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Note that this coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival, which was deliberately held on the outskirts of the country's capital city, in a rubric dedicated to '*la brousse*' (designating all of New Caledonia outside the capital) and written by a Kanak author might be viewed as an attempt by LJC to discursively confine *Mélanésie 2000* to the '*milieu mélanésien*' (thereby effectively marginalising the festival and limiting its possible significance) and to symbolically expulse this event (and by implication any strong Kanak presence) from Noumea, the 'heart' of 'European'/French New Caledonia.

¹²¹ Guièdre Wamedjo, 'MELANESIA 2000 : UNE REUSSITE EXCEPTIONNELLE', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 82, 10-16/09/1975, 17.

*conscience acquise, il faut qu'il s'efforce de jouer le rôle en s'astreignant à des obligations qu'imposent la vie moderne sans chercher à perdre pour autant s'il le désire son côté originel marqué par la coutume et une vie plus communautaire et qui a été largement exprimée au cours du festival...*¹²²

The fact that the preservation of any unique Kanak cultural identity is portrayed as a matter of individual choice reinforces the dominance posited in this discourse of a particular model of Western society and identity, which are not themselves represented as a matter of individual choice but rather as an inescapable reality of existence in the 'modern' world. Indeed, the article goes on to suggest that, while '*la coutume*' and the Kanak '*forme de vie*' are in need of '*un cadre plus moderne, plus adapté aux exigences*', they should be '*conservés pour quelques générations encore afin de ne pas détruire la cellule de famille*.'¹²³ On the other hand, Kanak 'culture', reduced to 'folklore', is represented by Wamedjo as having been given, through *Mélanésie 2000* and its purported adaptation of Kanak 'culture' to a more 'modern' framework, a lasting place in the New Caledonian '*contexte culturel*' as one of the many 'cultures' '*qui [font] partie de cette petite France des antipodes*'.¹²⁴ Wamedjo's highly positive appraisal of the festival rests primarily on this appreciation of its nature and significance.

Les Calédoniens

In contrast, the 'radical' left-wing publication, LC, valorises Kanak 'custom' and specifically highlights and attributes importance to the 'customary' exchanges and inscription of *Mélanésie 2000*'s mini-festivals and main festival. This is in keeping with

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid. Although this suggestion relates to Kanak socio-cultural identity and distinctiveness, rather than to the physical survival of Kanak people as a group or 'race', it bears strong similarities to those colonial discourses according to which the Kanak population of New Caledonia was on the road to an inevitable extinction. Moreover, such suggestions, restricted as in this instance to the domain of Kanak culture and identity, were not unusual 1975: see Missotte (1995: 63, footnotenote 28); Bensa (2000: 9).

¹²⁴ Guièdre Wamedjo, 'MELANESIA 2000 : UNE REUSSITE EXCEPTIONNELLE', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 82, 10-16/09/1975, 17.

LC's broader expressed concern to include information in relation to the specificities of Kanak society and 'culture' (understood in its broadest sense, including both way of life and worldview), a concern which is itself identified as being driven by a concern for the country's harmonious future development and decolonisation. LC consequently published a substantial number of prominent, lengthy articles in relation to *Mélanésie 2000* from this publication's first edition in February 1975 until the last articles appearing on this subject in September 1975.¹²⁵

In one article on *Mélanésie 2000* published in July 1975, while reiterating its initial concerns and critical perspective in relation to the main festival and its ultimate outcome (discussed below), LC identifies the mini-festivals as nevertheless being '*des manifestations qui, à elles seules, sont des réussites.*'¹²⁶ In addition to the posited predominance of '*mélanésien acteurs-spectateurs*' in comparison to '*européens spectateurs-voyeurs*' at the mini-festivals, the reasons for this 'success' identified by LC are:

*parce qu'elles consistent à faire revivre, en les actualisant, certaines coutumes d'accueil et d'échanges, avec dons et contre-dons, qui sont à la base de l'économie de la société canaque [...] [et] parce que, pour ou contre le Festival et l'Administration, chacun y participe selon la coutume. L'unité tribale s'est trouvée renforcée par le conflit à partir du moment où il a été fait appel, pour le résoudre, à des solutions coutumières.*¹²⁷

However, despite this acknowledgement, no further, precise details are given by this paper on these 'customary' exchanges and the inscription of the mini-festivals and of *Mélanésie 2000* as a whole in Kanak 'custom'.

¹²⁵ LC contains a total of 15 articles and 2 cartoons principally concerned with *Mélanésie 2000*, 9 of which were either headlined or printed (in whole or in part) on the front page of the relevant editions. Five articles have also been identified in which *Mélanésie 2000* is mentioned in the course of interviews or letters reproduced in the paper. The majority of the articles or items focused principally upon *Mélanésie 2000* comprise extended bodies of text (rather than photographs, which tend to predominate the coverage published by LFA and LNC, as discussed below).

¹²⁶ 'MELANESIA 2000 SUR LA BONNE VOIE', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 24, 17-23/07/1975, 3.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

In its treatment of the main festival, LC characterises the event as having been:

*le grand théâtre d'un regroupement Kanak de différents coins des îles
Loyauté et de la Grande Terre où les coutumes ancestrales rayonnent
aux yeux des générations comme de solides INSTITUTIONS.*¹²⁸

In this passage, LC can be seen to construct the character of Kanak 'custom' and 'customary' authorities as an established, coherent and legitimate contemporary political system – as *political* 'institutions'. The paper also constructs the festival project and its success in the same article as the expression and 'proof' of the (posited) shared Kanak *revendication* of political independence.¹²⁹ Thus, unlike the conservative and 'mainstream' local newspapers, the potentially radical implications of the '*démarche coutumière*' engaged through *Mélanésie 2000*'s mini-festivals and main festival are expressly highlighted in the coverage of LC, which even goes so far as to associate these political implications with the emerging *revendication* of Kanak independence.¹³⁰

Moreover, LC criticised the other local newspapers' coverage of the festival in relation to the 'customary' inscription of *Mélanésie 2000*, contending that no allusions were made therein '*aux coutumes, aux paroles ni au respect des traditions des premiers occupants*'.¹³¹ As can be seen from the above discussion, while this statement is overstated, the broader, potentially radical social, cultural and political significance and implications of the festival's 'customary' inscription were certainly not foregrounded in the coverage published by the daily newspapers and LJC.

On the other hand, other aspects of the festival were identified as being 'political' in nature in the coverage of LNC, LFA and LJC. The various discursive strategies

¹²⁸ 'vers un regroupement melanésien [sic] ?', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 33, 18-24/09/1975, 5.

¹²⁹ Ibid. This is discussed further below.

¹³⁰ On the other hand, although LC was broadly aware of the 'customary' inscription of the festival and of the importance of that inscription, the paper was not privy to the 'customary' processes themselves and it appears to have remained ignorant of the precise nature, specifics and scope of the realisation of *Mélanésie 2000*'s '*démarche coutumière*'.

¹³¹ 'MELANESIA 2000: LE GRAND RASSEMBLEMENT DE L'HISTOIRE KANAK', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 32, 11-17/09/1975, 6.

mobilised by these papers to either occlude these aspects of the festival and/or to sever them from the (otherwise 'legitimate') festival project are discussed below. Before turning to this and to a consideration of the festival's expressed objectives and message as they were represented in the local written press, it is worth considering the construction of *Mélanésie 2000* as an a-political and, indeed, an entirely politically irrelevant matter and event in the coverage of these three conservative newspapers, particularly in May 1975, when this issue became the centre of a minor political controversy, compared to its consistent treatment as inherently political in the coverage of LC.

***Mélanésie 2000* in the local written press – 'culture' or 'politics'?**

The potential 'political' inscription of the *Mélanésie 2000* project was addressed directly in the local print media in the lead up to the main festival primarily by reason of the controversy which arose around this issue in the local political domain both within 'mainstream' political parties and institutions in May 1975¹³² and with the criticisms voiced by radical Kanak student groups, particularly subsequent to the first mini-festival held on Lifou at the end of February 1975.

A politically irrelevant 'cultural' event in the discourse of the 'mainstream' and conservative papers

LNC, LFA and LJC all expressly constructed the festival project as being 'cultural' rather than 'political' in nature at the time of the controversy in May 1975, which was criticised as having been sparked by the illegitimate attempted 'politicisation' of the

¹³² This episode began with a communiqué released subsequent to a meeting of the '*bureau politique*' of the UC on the 13 May, in which the party expressed its support for the call of various youth groups to boycott *Mélanésie 2000*. This sparked a series of political communiqués supporting the event and an official '*vœu de soutien*' adopted by the Territorial Assembly.

event.¹³³ Confined to the realm of ‘culture’, the festival was thus discursively constructed as incapable of having any significant relevance to local ‘politics’. In this manner, its potential to challenge the established socio-political status quo in New Caledonia (defined by its character as belonging to and within the French Republic) was discursively foreclosed by these papers. Moreover, *Mélanésie 2000* as a ‘cultural’ event was constructed in the discourse of these papers as being rendered possible by that established socio-political order, which was naturalised and constructed as unchallenged and unchallengeable.

An inherently political ‘cultural’ event in the critical discourse of *Les Calédoniens* and the radical Kanak militant groups

In contrast, LC treated *Mélanésie 2000* as having political implications both for Kanak people and for the country as a whole from the very outset, particularly in relation to past, present and future processes of colonisation and exploitation in New Caledonia. Consequently, questions as to the ‘politicisation’ of the festival (which are necessarily predicated on the construction of *Mélanésie 2000* as not itself being ‘political’) seldom appear in the pages of LC.¹³⁴ However, the paper’s analysis and evaluation of the political inscription and the potential political implications of *Mélanésie 2000* can be seen to change significantly during the period leading up to and including the September main festival.¹³⁵

¹³³ See particularly ‘L’Assemblée apporte sa caution à MELANESIA 2000’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/05/1975, 4; ‘POUR OU CONTRE “MELANESIA 2000” – Une affaire politisée’, *La France Australe*, 17/05/1975, 3; ‘A propos de Melanesia 2000 – NE MELONS PAS LA CULTURE ET LA POLITIQUE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/05/1975, 6; ‘Le Billet de l’Affreux Jojo’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 21/05/1975, 1, 23; ‘FESTIVAL MELANESIA 2000 – DEROUTE DE LENORMAND’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 66, 22-27/05/1975, 20; Jean GOTT VALLES, ‘FAUT-IL CRAINDRE MELANESIA 2000 ?’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 81, 03-09/09/1975, 5.

¹³⁴ Note that the May party-political controversy is referred to only once in this publication, and then only indirectly when it is mentioned by Nidoïsh Naisseline in an interview in LC in July: ‘M. NIDOISH NAISSELINE S’EXPLIQUE : « IL Y A AUTANT D’INDÉPENDANCES QU’IL Y A DE PAYS INDÉPENDANTS »’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 23, 10-16/07/1975, 6.

¹³⁵ This change was explicitly acknowledged by the paper itself on several occasions. For example, in the second-last edition to treat *Mélanésie 2000* (published in September, subsequent to the main festival),

LC's coverage of the festival was primarily constituted by, on the one hand, a series of 'études'¹³⁶ in which *Mélanésie 2000* is analysed critically, particularly in terms of its purported aims and significance, and, on the other, reproduced tracts, communiqués, letters and other texts produced externally to the paper in relation to the festival. All of these latter texts are highly critical of *Mélanésie 2000* and, with only two exceptions,¹³⁷ were originally produced by various groups of young Kanak radicals. The extensive (often integral) reproduction of these texts, and the broadly sympathetic view of this paper towards the positions and actions of the radical Kanak groups existing at the time, clearly distinguish LC from the two daily newspapers (which marginalised and excluded these groups from the sphere of legitimate discourse and action) and from LJC (which, in addition to discursively constructing these groups as marginal and illegitimate, expressly vilified them). Moreover, not only did LC provide a medium and forum for the expression of the voices of these groups and their criticisms of *Mélanésie 2000* in the local public sphere, but the highly critical perspective expressed initially by LC itself in relation to the festival project appears to have been strongly influenced by the positions adopted and expressed by these groups.

The criticisms of *Mélanésie 2000* articulated by the radical Kanak groups can be seen to have primarily concerned two interrelated aspects of the festival project. Certain criticisms related to the fact that the project was organised within and funded by the local and national State administration.¹³⁸ In the view of groups such as the *Groupe*

Jean-Paul Caillard characterises the coverage of the festival by LC as follows: '[n]ous n'avons jamais combattu *Mélanésie 2000*, mais [...] 1°) été très sceptiques au départ et de moins en moins ensuite sur le caractère culturel de « *Mélanésie 2000* » [...] 2°) donné la parole à ceux qui étaient contre et n'avaient pas accès à la presse bien pensante.' Jean-Paul Caillard, 'LES FASCISTES DE SALON', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 33, 18-24/09/1975, 2. Note that LC often refers to the 'mainstream', conservative, right-wing and anti-autonomy/anti-independence local press ironically as '*la presse bien pensante*'.

¹³⁶ This characterisation is used by the paper itself.

¹³⁷ See *Les Calédoniens*, no. 5, 05/03/1975, 13; 'ANCETRE DU FESTIVAL « MELANESIA 2000 » : L'EXPOSITION [sic] COLONIALE DE 1931.', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 30, 28/08-03/09/1975, 4-5.

¹³⁸ The government funding attributed to the *Mélanésie 2000* project was far greater than the funding attributed to previous projects specifically aimed at and primarily concerning the Kanak population. In an article published by LFA in mid-August, the total budget for *Mélanésie 2000* was given as 26 million F CFP, the majority of which was supplied by various ministries, departments and bodies within the local (Territorial and municipal) and national governments and administration. 'LE CONSEIL MUNICIPAL a

1878 (which distributed a tract denouncing the festival and calling for its Kanak boycott¹³⁹ and which appears to have militated to that effect within various Kanak communities¹⁴⁰), the *Foulards Rouges* (before its dissolution in March 1975)¹⁴¹ and a group of ‘*étudiants kanaks*’ then in France (who authored a similar text to the tract distributed by the *Group 1878*),¹⁴² *Mélanésie 2000* constituted a cynical political manoeuvre and attempted ‘*récupération*’ by the ‘colonial’ administration, designed to distract Kanak people from the realities of their persisting marginalisation, exploitation and domination within New Caledonian society and to quell the rising political demands for the recognition and restitution of specific Kanak rights, particularly including the return of ‘customary’ lands and the demand for decolonisation.¹⁴³

The festival was also viewed in this perspective as being a further example of the colonial and capitalist exploitation and denigration of the Kanak people by the French

visité les installations de MELANESIA 2000’, *La France Australe*, 13/08/1975, 4. Furthermore, the army assisted in transporting the delegations of participants to and from the main festival site and the City Council of Noumea agreed to the loan of the land on which the main festival site was constructed and assisted with the construction of the necessary infrastructure and facilities. The total expenditure was, however, substantially greater than 26 million F CFP. According to the project’s ‘*bilan financier*’, total expenditure was 41.4 million F CFP, with total revenue being 34 million F CFP. The total revenue obtained from the administration/government was 24.4 million F CFP. See Missotte (1985: Annex 8 for Chapter 5, 144).

¹³⁹ This tract was reproduced in full by LC and in part in LJC: ‘melanesia 2000’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 4, 01/03/1975, 12-13; ‘DU TAC AU TAC’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 56, 12-18/03/1975, 2.

¹⁴⁰ See Trépiéd (2007: 625).

¹⁴¹ Note that the failure of certain militants to adopt the official position of the *Foulards Rouges* against *Mélanésie 2000* (decided in late January 1975) was cited as one of the reasons for the dissolution of the group: ‘DISSOLUTION DES FOULARDS ROUGES’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 8, 15/03/1975, 7. LJC suggests in an interview with Tjibaou published after the main festival in September that numerous members of the *Foulards Rouges* were actively involved as participants in *Mélanésie 2000*: ‘L’avocat du diable à cœur ouvert avec : Jean-Marie Tjibaou’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 5.

¹⁴² This text was signed by, amongst others, Paul Tyaou Néaoutyine and Fote Trolue. It was reproduced in full by LC in May 1975: ‘melanesia 2000 – ÉTUDIANTS KANAKS EN FRANCE : UNE POSITION RADICALE CONTRE LE FESTIVAL « MÉLANÉSIA 2000 »’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 19, 15-21/05/1975, 16-17. See also Trolue’s 1995 ‘*témoignage*’ in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*: Trolue and Caihe (1995).

¹⁴³ See ‘melanesia 2000’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 4, 01/03/1975, 12-13; ‘melanesia 2000 – ÉTUDIANTS KANAKS EN FRANCE : UNE POSITION RADICALE CONTRE LE FESTIVAL « MÉLANÉSIA 2000 »’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 19, 15-21/05/1975, 16-17. See also the retrospective characterisations of the position adopted by the *Groupe 1878* articulated by Elie Poigoune and Déwé Gorodé, cited respectively by Trépiéd (2007: 623) and Brown (2008: 549-551).

administration.¹⁴⁴ It was likened to prostitution and denounced as being in keeping with the exhibition of Kanak people as performing animals at the Colonial Exhibition in 1931 in Paris¹⁴⁵ and in keeping with the political strategy used in ancient Rome of ‘*panem et circenses*’, here offered by the colonial administration to the country’s non-Kanak population at the expense of the Kanak people.¹⁴⁶ The promotion and realisation of the festival project through Kanak ‘customary’ paths and authorities was denounced as a manipulation and exploitation of Kanak ‘custom’.¹⁴⁷ The Kanak organisers of the festival were characterised: by the *Foulards Rouges* as ‘[*bafouant*] *la personnalité kanake*’ and as ‘*à la solde du colonialisme français*’;¹⁴⁸ by the *Groupe 1878* as ‘traitors’ of the Kanak people and as ‘*bons esclaves*’;¹⁴⁹ and by the Kanak students in France as ‘executioners’ of Kanak culture, complicitous with their colonial ‘masters’.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ See, for example, ‘DISSOLUTION DES FOULARDS ROUGES’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 8, 15/03/1975, 7.

¹⁴⁵ ‘melanesia 2000’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 4, 01/03/1975, 12; ‘ANCETRE DU FESTIVAL « MELANESIA 2000 » : L’EXPOSITION [sic] COLONIALE DE 1931.’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 30, 28/08-03/09/1975, 4-5.

¹⁴⁶ ‘melanesia 2000’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 4, 01/03/1975, 13.

¹⁴⁷ This criticism was expressed explicitly in the text of the Kanak students in metropolitan France and implicitly in the *Group 1878* tract. ‘melanesia 2000 – ÉTUDIANTS KANAKS EN FRANCE : UNE POSITION RADICALE CONTRE LE FESTIVAL « MÉLANÉSIA 2000 »’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 19, 15-21/05/1975, 16-17; ‘melanesia 2000’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 4, 01/03/1975, 12-13. See also Trolue’s subsequent ‘*témoignage*’: Trolue and Caihe (1995: 156, 161).

¹⁴⁸ ‘DISSOLUTION DES FOULARDS ROUGES’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 8, 15/03/1975, 7.

¹⁴⁹ ‘melanesia 2000’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 4, 01/03/1975, 12. This element of the group’s criticism is not clearly apparent in the retrospective accounts of Elie Poigoune and Déwé Gorodé, cited respectively in Trépied (2007: 623) and Brown (2008: 549-551). However, Gorodé maintains that the subsequent engagement of Tjibaou and others in the political struggle for Kanak independence, particularly with the cancellation of the Festival of Pacific Arts and the active boycott of the elections in 1984, vindicates the direct political engagement adopted from the beginning by radical groups such as the *Groupe 1878* as having been the right approach: see Brown (2008: 549).

¹⁵⁰ ‘melanesia 2000 – ÉTUDIANTS KANAKS EN FRANCE : UNE POSITION RADICALE CONTRE LE FESTIVAL « MÉLANÉSIA 2000 »’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 19, 15-21/05/1975, 16-17. Note that, according to Missotte, the positions adopted by the radical Kanak groups in opposition to *Mélanésia 2000* and their critiques of the festival described here were reinforced by the nature of the coverage of the festival published by the different local newspapers at the beginning of 1975 – the time at which those positions and critiques were first publically articulated. Missotte contends that: ‘[c]es positions furent soutenues – à ce moment là – dans la presse locale par le journal « *Les calédoniens* » [...] qui cherchait sa clientèle dans un public plutôt progressiste, alors que la presse habituellement considérée comme conservatrice pro-colons et peu suspecte de faire des cadeaux aux Canaque soutenait le Festival, ce qui renforçait ces critiques.’ Missotte (1995b: 72, footnote 66).

The identification by these radical Kanak groups of *Mélanésie 2000* as a political manoeuvre and attempted ‘*récupération*’ by the State is largely confirmed by an analysis of the public statements made by the national and local government supporters of the project.¹⁵¹ However, while these political motivations and the resulting financial and political support for the festival rendered *Mélanésie 2000* possible, they did not ultimately determine its significance or impact.

This was emphasised by Tjibaou himself in an interview in March 1984, when he maintained:

[L]e Gouvernement central a pu penser à une opération de récupération. Les autorités conservatrices locales ont accepté le projet, non sans méfiance, puisqu’il s’agissait d’un projet officiel. Les blocages – historiques et psychologiques, plus que culturels – ont rendu la petite-bourgeoisie plus hostile à la manifestation. Quant aux Mélanésiens, ils étaient partagés. [...] Dans le contexte politique d’une interruption des discussions sur le statut, conduites à Paris, dans le contexte social de l’absence des Mélanésiens de tout poste de responsabilité et leur faible intégration scolaire, l’opération, bien couverte, eut un impact important.

¹⁵¹ See, for example, the text of the ‘*vœu de soutien*’ of the festival project voted by the conservative political parties in the Territorial Assembly, reproduced in ‘L’Assemblée apporte sa caution à MELANESIA 2000’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/05/1975, 4; ‘POUR OU CONTRE “MELANESIA 2000” – Une affaire politisée’, *La France Australe*, 17/05/1975, 3. See also Dick Ukeiwé’s comments reproduced in ‘LA DÉCLARATION DU NOUVEAU PRÉSIDENT’, *La France Australe*, 04/09/1975, 3; ‘L’HONNEUR D’ÊTRE PRÉSIDENT’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/09/1975, 21; ‘L’avocat du diable à cœur ouvert avec : DICK UKEIWE’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 84, 24-30/09/1975, 5. In terms of the support for the festival project by the French State, two public addresses to the Territorial Assembly made respectively by Olivier Stirn (the French Minister for DOM-TOM) in January 1975 and by Jean-Gabriel Eriau (New Caledonia’s High Commissioner) at the beginning of September 1975 are particularly enlightening. In both of these addresses (which were reproduced by the daily newspapers) the speakers’ discussion of the State’s endorsement and financial support of *Mélanésie 2000* is based on the festival’s discursive representation as an event that is entirely congruent with and confirmatory of the dominant socio-political material and symbolic order in place in New Caledonia, defined as essentially and immutably a part of the French Republic. See ‘LE DISCOURS DE M. STIRN DEVANT L’ASSEMBLÉE TERRITORIALE’, *La France Australe*, 25-26/01/1975, 9; ‘LE DISCOURS DU MINISTRE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/01/1975, 15; ‘Ouverture de la session budgétaire 1975 à l’Assemblée – LE PROGRES DANS LE CHANGEMENT EN LUTTANT CONTRE LES INEGALITES, tel est le thème du discours prononcé par M. J.-G. ERIAU’, *La France Australe*, 04/09/1975, 4-5; ‘LES PRINCIPAUX POINTS DU DISCOURS DU HAUSSAIRE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/09/1975, 22-23.

*Pour la première fois, deux mille Mélanésiens déplacés à Nouméa y revendiquaient ouvertement leur identité.*¹⁵²

Tjibaou thus appears to have adopted a pragmatic approach in relation to the funding and support of the French State and the local conservative political parties as a means of achieving the festival and pursuing the broader objectives of the project.¹⁵³

The second, intimately interrelated focus of the radical Kanak groups' criticism of *Mélanésie 2000* was the festival's perceived 'folklorisation' of 'authentic' Kanak culture.¹⁵⁴ Associated with this criticism were the use of Western technologies (such as sound and lighting systems) and the employment of Metropolitan-French professionals by the Organising Committee, as well as the involvement of the three non-Kanak members of the Committee.¹⁵⁵ The tract distributed by the *Groupe 1878* stated:

*nous savons très bien qu'à cause du colonialisme Français, il ne nous reste plus grand chose aujourd'hui de la pureté originelle de notre culture. Les restes de cette culture survivent encore à la tribu : c'est là seulement qu'un jeune Kanak digne de ce nom peut retrouver auprès des vieux ce qui lui reste de sa culture[,] de sa civilisation et de son existence. Non pas sur une estrade avec sonorisateur devant des spectateurs blancs qui ne comprennent rien aux coutumes Kanaks, devant des gens qui, au fond se foutent pas mal de ce que la culture Kanake peut avoir de sacré, de profond, de vivant et d'humain.*¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Tjibaou (1996: 152).

¹⁵³ This pragmatism in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*'s organisation and realisation was also clearly indicated and acknowledged by Tjibaou in an earlier interview in 1977 (*ibid.*, 45)¹⁵³ and has been highlighted by various commentators, including Guiart (1996: 97); Mokaddem (2005a: 136); and Trépiéd (2007: 624).

¹⁵⁴ See, for example, the *Groupe 1878* tract reproduced in 'melanesia 2000', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 4, 01/03/1975, 12.

¹⁵⁵ In this latter respect, Nidoïsh Naisseline expressed the following concern: '[o]n a l'impression une fois encore qu'il nous faut quelqu'un pour nous aider à nous exprimer.' 'M. NIDOISH NAISSELINE S'EXPLIQUE: «IL Y A AUTANT D'INDÉPENDANCES QU'IL Y A DE PAYS INDÉPENDANTS »', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 23, 10-16/07/1975, 6. The non-Kanak individuals concerned are identified in Annex 2.

¹⁵⁶ Reproduced in 'melanesia 2000', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 4, 01/03/1975, 13.

Once again, Tjibaou's response to these criticisms was grounded in a certain pragmatism, being based on a dynamic conception of cultural 'authenticity' and identity as fundamentally and inextricably linked to historical context, and therefore as inevitably changing through time.¹⁵⁷ In the initial document written in 1974 to explain the '*pourquoi*' of the festival project, Tjibaou thus identified one of *Mélanésie 2000*'s objectives as being to '*permettre au canaque de se projeter face à lui-même pour qu'il redécouvre l'identité qui est la sienne en 1975.*'¹⁵⁸ In an interview with LJC published after the main festival in September 1975, Tjibaou discussed '*la notion d'authenticité d'une culture*' and affirmed that:

[*l*]a culture « authentique » d'il y a cent ans, n'a que peu de choses à voir avec celle d'aujourd'hui, et encore moins avec celle qui existera dans cent ans. L'authenticité culturelle est toujours fonction du moment, elle est sans cesse remise en question.¹⁵⁹

This perspective was similarly articulated by Tjibaou in an interview in 1977 in response to the critiques of *Mélanésie 2000* as 'inauthentic' as a Kanak cultural event, particularly in light of the presence of non-Kanak individuals in the Organising Committee and the employment of non-Kanak technicians in realising the main festival and its *jeu scénique*.¹⁶⁰ A similar, dynamic view of culture and identity was also expressed by Tjibaou in an interview in 1985, when he affirmed in a now celebrated passage that: '*[l]e retour à la tradition, c'est un mythe [...]. Notre identité, elle est devant nous.*'¹⁶¹ This phrase and idea have been adopted as guiding principles for a number of the more recent cultural projects undertaken in New Caledonia, including

¹⁵⁷ Recall that Tjibaou's conception of Kanak 'custom', similar to and interconnecting with his conception of Kanak 'culture' and 'identity', can be seen to correspond to a dynamic system, interconnected to the changing historical contexts within and in relation to which it is continually reformulated, re-enacted and (consequently) perpetuated.

¹⁵⁸ Emphasis added, Tjibaou in Missotte (1995b: 67).

¹⁵⁹ 'L'avocat du diable à cœur ouvert avec : Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 5.

¹⁶⁰ Tjibaou (1996: 41-42). Tjibaou maintains in this interview that: '*[l]’authenticité est liée au temps, et elle est toujours liée à l’histoire, à une certaine existentialité de l’être*': *ibid.*, 42.

¹⁶¹ Original emphasis, *ibid.*, 185.

particularly the CCT, the eighth Festival of Pacific Arts in 2000 and the fourth Festival of Melanesian Arts in 2010.

In his 1977 interview in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*, Tjibaou contended that the majority of the Kanak participants in *Mélanésie 2000* were unconcerned by such issues of cultural ‘authenticity’.¹⁶² Nevertheless, Tjibaou did acknowledge that the criticisms of the festival project in relation to Kanak ‘authenticity’ provoked useful reflection on this subject within the festival’s Organising Committee.¹⁶³ However, a number of the other members of the Organising Committee and the technicians involved in realising the main festival expressed views in relation to such questions of ‘authenticity’ (in general or in relation to specific aspects of the festival) which at times seem to tend towards an essentialised, static and/or unproblematised view of ‘authenticity’, sourced in a past which is conceived as separated from the present – views which can be contrasted to the perspective articulated by Tjibaou.¹⁶⁴ These other comments and views reveal the inherent tensions between and within various aspects of *Mélanésie 2000* and, indeed, within Tjibaou’s own conception of ‘authenticity’, stemming from its simultaneous affirmation of both continuity and discontinuity with ‘the past’.¹⁶⁵

Questions of ‘authenticity’ were particularly prominent in LC’s coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*. This paper’s initial approach to the festival broadly echoes a number of the

¹⁶² Ibid., 42.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ See, for example, Georges Dobbelaere quoted in ‘UN SPECIALISTE DES GRANDES MISES EN SCENE POUR « MELANESIA 2000 »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/05/1975, 8; Alain Tartas, ‘Le reflet de motivations profondes’, *Melanesia : journal du festival*, no. 2, September 1975, 5, reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 91); Scholastique Pidjot, ‘Le festival : une idée des femmes du Mouvement pour un souriant village mélanésien’, *Melanesia : journal du festival*, no. 3, September 1975, 3, reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 97); Jacques Iékawé, ‘Une recherche interne pour conserver un acquis de référence’, *Melanesia : journal du festival*, no. 3, September 1975, 4, reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 98).

¹⁶⁵ This tension is apparent in Tjibaou and Missotte’s account in *Kanaké, Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie* of what they identify as the Kanak ‘*manière d’être au monde persistant au travers de l’histoire*’, or the Kanak ‘*éthique*’: see Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 112).

criticisms expressed by the radical Kanak groups.¹⁶⁶ Thus, a central element of LC's initial critique of *Mélanésie 2000* turned on the paper's construction of an opposition between the notion of an 'authentic' 'culture' (a notion valorised in this publication's discourse) and that of a superficial 'folklore' (this term being used in its pejorative sense¹⁶⁷ and situated hierarchically below the notion of 'culture'), combined with a critique of the relationship between Western and Kanak 'culture' in the past and present 'colonial' (and, indeed, 'modern' Western capitalist) context of New Caledonia.¹⁶⁸ While the position adopted by LC in relation to the festival can be seen broadly to shift through 1975 from being highly critical, to being conditionally supportive, to being highly and unconditionally supportive subsequent to the main festival's conclusion, this publication's coverage nevertheless betrays a consistent tendency towards reductive, essentialising representations of both Kanak and 'European' or Western culture and identity.

Furthermore, throughout its coverage of the festival LC can be seen to implicitly claim access to 'privileged' knowledge and understanding in relation to Kanak cultural 'authenticity' and Kanak identity and consciousness. The paper consequently positions itself as a legitimate and 'authoritative' commentator, critic and judge in relation to these subjects (including *Mélanésie 2000* itself, as a Kanak cultural festival), despite the fact that its ownership, editorial direction and journalistic team were not Kanak. The non-Kanak character of the publication was, moreover, clearly reflected in the discourse

¹⁶⁶ On the other hand, unlike the texts produced by these radical groups in opposition to the festival, in its coverage LC considered and placed more weight on the festival's expressed objectives (as, for example, articulated by Tjibaou in his initial 1974 text), of which the paper was broadly supportive from the outset.

¹⁶⁷ As noted by *Le Nouveau Petit Robert*, the term 'folklore' can refer, in a relatively 'neutral' manner, to the 'ensemble' 'des traditions, des usages et de l'art populaires d'un pays, d'une région, d'un groupe humain', or, more narrowly and in a more directly evaluative sense, to the '[a]spect pittoresque mais sans importance profonde' of that 'ensemble': Rey-Debove and Rey (1993: 1093).

¹⁶⁸ The considerable emphasis placed on *Mélanésie 2000* by LC and the publication's initial, highly critical attitude towards the festival are illustrated in the first three editions of the paper. See 'SUPER KERMESSE OU RENOUVEAU CULTUREL MELANESIEN – MÉLANESIA [sic] 2000 – APRES LE "MINI-FESTIVAL" DE LIFOU', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 1, 19/02/1975, 1; 'melanesia 2000 – EXPRESSION D'UNE CULTURE ? – KERMESSE FOLKLORIQUE ?', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 1, 19/02/1975, 12-13; 'melanesia 2000 – L'OPPOSITION BENEFIQUE ENTRE DEUX CULTURES', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 2, 22/02/1975, 12-13; 'melanesia 2000 – RENOUVEAU CULTUREL par la PRISE de CONSCIENCE', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 3, 26/02/1975, 12-13.

articulated by the paper, the authorship and perspective of which (being radical, anti-colonial, socialist and local ‘European’) is expressly differentiated from the radical Kanak groups with which the paper nevertheless strongly sympathises. Thus, as noted by Missotte, like the two dailies and LJC, LC: ‘*ont beaucoup de mal à éviter de ne pas dire aux Mélanésiens comment ils doivent se comporter pour faire revivre leur culture.*’¹⁶⁹

Like the radical Kanak groups,¹⁷⁰ LC’s critique highlights *Mélanésie 2000*’s non-Kanak organisers – that is, the ‘European’ members of the Organising Committee within the local administration. In contrast, the two daily newspapers and LJC all tend to occlude the existence, involvement and role of these non-Kanak members of the Organising Committee, emphasising rather its Kanak members and/or the Metropolitan-French specialists employed by the Committee for the preparation and realisation of the main festival.¹⁷¹

In its first article treating *Mélanésie 2000*, LC represents the festival as an attempt by its Kanak organisers not to ‘*sauver la vie de la culture canaque mais de sauver la face à son engloutissement dans la culture occidentale.*’¹⁷² LC essentially disqualifies the festival’s Kanak organisers in this first article as ‘truly’ or ‘authentically’ Kanak. In this respect, LC goes further than any of the radical Kanak groups in its criticism of the festival’s Kanak organisers, for, while those organisers were characterised in the texts produced by the radical Kanak groups in opposition to the festival variously as

¹⁶⁹ Missotte (1985: 521).

¹⁷⁰ See ‘melanesia 2000’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 4, 01/03/1975, 12-13; ‘MELANESIA 2000 : mini-festival MARE – pas d’élection de MISS’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 7 [note that this issue is numbered incorrectly as number 9], 12/03/1975, 15; ‘M. NIDOISH NAISSELINE S’EXPLIQUE : « IL Y A AUTANT D’INDÉPENDANCES QU’IL Y A DE PAYS INDÉPENDANTS »’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 23, 10-16/07/1975, 6.

¹⁷¹ On a very few occasions, the names of the non-Kanak organisers (particularly Yves Tissandier) are mentioned in these three publications, but no direct or explicit reference is ever made in these papers to *Mélanésie 2000* as having locally-based non-Kanak, ‘European’ organisers. The different and changing emphasis placed by these papers on the festival’s Kanak organisers and/or its Metropolitan-French technicians is discussed further below.

¹⁷² ‘melanesia 2000 - EXPRESSION D’UNE CULTURE ? - KERMESE FOLKLORIQUE ?’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 1, 19/02/1975, 13.

‘traitors’¹⁷³ of their people, as ‘bons esclaves’,¹⁷⁴ ‘bons canaques’,¹⁷⁵ ‘chiens de garde’,¹⁷⁶ or even ‘bourreaux’ doing the bidding and in the payment of their colonial ‘maîtres’,¹⁷⁷ their identity as Kanak was not called into question. This aspect of LC’s discourse is founded on a narrow, rigid and essentialised construction of Kanak cultural ‘authenticity’ and ethnic identity. LC’s apparently unqualified criticism of *Mélanésie 2000*’s Kanak organisers in this article is moderated in subsequent articles written and published by the paper, and is ultimately replaced by a highly positive appraisal of the festival and its Kanak organisers in the wake of the September main-festival. However, the reductive, essentialising nature of LC’s representations of Kanak people, culture, identity and society can be seen to generally persist, if in changing forms.¹⁷⁸

The closing section of the first article published by LC in relation to *Mélanésie 2000* represents the festival as being a step towards the ‘folklorisation’ (understood in a pejorative sense, as the process whereby a culture is reduced to its most superficial manifestations, devoid of any deeper socio-cultural significance or meaning) of

¹⁷³ By both the *Groupe 1878* in its tract and by the group of Kanak students in Metropolitan France in their text – see ‘melanesia 2000’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 4, 01/03/1975, 12; ‘melanesia 2000 – ÉTUDIANTS KANAKS EN FRANCE : UNE POSITION RADICALE CONTRE LE FESTIVAL « MÉLANÉSIA 2000 »’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 19, 15-21/05/1975, 17.

¹⁷⁴ See ‘melanesia 2000’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 4, 01/03/1975, 12.

¹⁷⁵ ‘melanesia 2000 – ÉTUDIANTS KANAKS EN FRANCE : UNE POSITION RADICALE CONTRE LE FESTIVAL « MÉLANÉSIA 2000 »’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 19, 15-21/05/1975, 17-18.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

¹⁷⁸ This is apparent in the last significant article published by LC in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*, constituted by an extended interview with Tjibaou entitled: ‘JM. TJIBAOU – L’ÊTRE et L’AVOIR différencient les deux cultures : Kanak et Occidentale.’ In the introductory passage heading this interview LC refers to ‘les principaux fondements des deux sociétés qui font qu’elles n’accèdent pas toujours aux mêmes aspirations’, and to the existence of ‘difficultés de compréhension entre deux sociétés aux essences différentes : traditionnelle et occidentale.’ This introduction clearly foregrounds the posited existence of a ‘fundamental’, ‘essential’ difference between Kanak and Western cultures (which are themselves also defined in terms of ‘essences’), consistent with this paper’s earlier coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*. Note that LC’s unqualified representations of the ‘fundamental differences’ between Kanak and Western cultures (which are themselves also discussed in essentialising terms) can be contrasted in certain respects with the discourse articulated by Tjibaou in this interview. For, while some degree of essentialisation is apparent in Tjibaou’s comments, he also articulates a dynamic view of Kanak culture in relation to its development through time. See ‘JM. TJIBAOU – L’ÊTRE et L’AVOIR différencient les deux cultures : Kanak et Occidentale.’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 34, 25/09-01/10/1975, 1, 2, 3.

‘authentic’ Kanak ‘culture’, ‘ramener au niveau d’un gentil folklore par une culture occidentale agressive et désorientée.’¹⁷⁹ Moreover, LC affirms in this article that, through such a process of ‘folklorisation’,

[I]es mélanésiens deviendraient un type particulier d’occidentaux, comme il y a les bretons, les anglais, les italiens du nord et ceux du sud, les corses, les australiens... sans oublier les américains.¹⁸⁰

More specifically, LC identifies the decision of the (‘colonial’) administration to fund *Mélanésie 2000*, characterised as ‘un Festival plus folklorique que culturel, qui meublera agréablement, pendant quelques temps l’actualité et les déclarations touristiques’, as corresponding to a (posited) ‘official perspective’, in which New Caledonia is to be made into ‘un « coin de France » avec de simple particularités locales’.¹⁸¹ Thus, in LC’s initial coverage questions of Kanak culture and identity are treated as inherently political and the purported ‘folklorisation’ of Kanak ‘culture’ through *Mélanésie 2000* is criticised for its political implications (and, indeed, motivations) in the contemporary ‘colonial’ context of New Caledonia.

Questions of ‘culture’ and ‘folklore’ in the ‘mainstream’ and conservative local written press

The hierarchically ordered opposition between the concepts of ‘culture’ (defined as ‘authentic’ and significant) and ‘folklore’ (defined as ‘inauthentic’ and insignificant) constructed and mobilised discursively by LC as the basis of its initial critique of *Mélanésie 2000* is not apparent in the coverage published by the two local daily newspapers. These publications refer to *Mélanésie 2000*’s mini-festivals and its main festival as both ‘cultural’ and ‘folklorique’ events, without any apparent systematic division being drawn or differentiation made between these two characterisations and,

¹⁷⁹ ‘melanesia 2000 - EXPRESSION D’UNE CULTURE ? - KERMESSE FOLKLORIQUE ?’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 1, 19/02/1975, 13.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

in most instances, without any apparent negative or critical connotations being attached to the use of the term '*folklore*' (and its derivatives).¹⁸²

Moreover, as seen above, in the two daily newspapers' coverage of the political controversy in May the notion of 'culture' is juxtaposed to that of 'politics', rather than to any idea of '*folklore*'. Indeed, the meaning and scope of the category of 'culture' is defined in the articles published by the two daily newspapers on the political controversy primarily through its posited distinction from and opposition to 'politics', so that the meaning and scope of 'culture' could potentially range from the very broad to the very narrow (at which point it might be synonymous with the narrow definition of '*folklore*'). However, while discursively confined to the realm of 'culture', *Mélanésie 2000* is still constructed in the discourse of these daily newspapers as being rendered possible by, and as an expression of the established socio-political order.

In the coverage published by LJC, *Mélanésie 2000* as a 'legitimate' project and event is similarly discursively confined to the realm of 'culture', as opposed to that of 'politics'. However, as seen above, in the principal article covering the main festival signed by Guièdre Wamedjo an analogous distinction to that drawn by LC between Kanak 'culture' and 'custom', on the one hand, and '*folklore*', on the other, is constructed, and *Mélanésie 2000* is effectively praised for having advanced and promoted the latter rather than the former, given its compatibility with life in the 'modern world' and French Republican values and citizenship.¹⁸³

On the other hand, in a subsequent editorial piece signed by Pierre Maresca¹⁸⁴ which discusses *Mélanésie 2000* contemporary (and possibly also past) Kanak 'culture' is implicitly disqualified as being 'true' 'culture', a term which is represented as validly

¹⁸² Note that LFA tends to use the term '*folklore*' (and its derivatives), alongside terms such as '*la tradition*', '*la coutume*' and '*la culture*', in reference to *Mélanésie 2000* more frequently than LNC.

¹⁸³ Guièdre Wamedjo, 'MELANESIA 2000 : UNE REUSSITE EXCEPTIONNELLE', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 82, 10-16/09/1975, 17.

¹⁸⁴ As noted in the Introduction, Maresca was LJC's '*Directeur*' throughout the entire period in which the organisation and realisation of *Mélanésie 2000* took place. The majority of editorials published by the paper are signed by Maresca.

attributable only to ‘high’ French/European/Western culture.¹⁸⁵ The treatment of *Mélanésie 2000* in this editorial (a genre which has a particularly important symbolic place and function in the context of newspaper discourse),¹⁸⁶ which also constitutes LJC’s final word on the festival, is of particular significance in relation to this paper’s overall discursive representation of *Mélanésie 2000*. Far beyond the discursive delimitation of *Mélanésie 2000* as a ‘purely cultural’ event in earlier articles published by LJC, the elitist discourse resonant with tropes from the colonial imaginary elaborated in this editorial denies the festival’s very claim to being categorised as ‘culture’, along with the claim of Kanak ‘culture’ itself to that title. *Mélanésie 2000* is likened to ‘*le western et le film porno*’ in the local ‘European’ ‘*milieu*’, all of which are represented as being equally culturally moribund (and popular) in New Caledonia.¹⁸⁷ In this editorial, Maresca and, by extension, LJC effectively denigrate and dismiss Kanak culture and *Mélanésie 2000*. Indeed, Maresca characterises the festival’s key message and objective as correlating to the so-called:

*creuset que souhaite voir forger un homme comme Jean-Marie Tjibaou, réceptacle d’où sortira la culture calédonienne, carrefour des terminaisons civilisatrices qui constituent la seule véritable richesse de ce Territoire.*¹⁸⁸

This characterisation and attitude can be directly contrasted to that expressed in an earlier article published by LJC just prior to the commencement of *Mélanésie 2000*’s main festival, in which the author, Jean Gott Valles, concludes:

[e]t dans quelques années, on pourra peut-être, comme le souhaitait Jean-Marie Tchibaou, **jeter les bases d’une Civilisation Calédonienne**,

¹⁸⁵ Pierre Maresca, ‘EDITORIAL – L’ARTISTE’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 5.

¹⁸⁶ For, while this text is signed by an individual, being designated specifically as an ‘editorial’ it can nevertheless be seen to engage ‘*la responsabilité morale de l’équipe tout entière*’: Grosse and Seibold (1994: 49). Indeed, as noted by van Dijk, the main function of editorials as a distinct genre of news discourse ‘is to formulate the newspaper’s official opinion’, generally about a known, recent event or issue: van Dijk (1993: 265).

¹⁸⁷ Pierre Maresca, ‘EDITORIAL – L’ARTISTE’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 5.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

*résultante des cultures des différentes ethnies qui ont fait l'histoire de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.*¹⁸⁹

In his subsequent editorial, Maresca uses his particular representation of *Mélanésie 2000* to 'demonstrate', lament and potentially incite action to curb the purported 'regression' and 'perversion' in New Caledonia of what he defines to be the only 'authentic', 'valid' and 'valuable' 'culture' – that is, 'high' French/European/Western culture – and its increasing separation and disconnection from culture in France, Europe and the West.¹⁹⁰ The political implications of this discourse, particularly in the context of this conservative, staunchly anti-independence publication, are readily apparent.

The progressive transformation of *Les Calédoniens*'s evaluation of *Mélanésie 2000*'s political implications

The perspective articulated by Maresca can clearly be contrasted to that articulated by LC in its first edition, discussed above. The article on *Mélanésie 2000* published in that edition was the first of a three-part series of critical '*études*' on the festival project.¹⁹¹ While the remaining two articles in this series developed further a number of the themes and criticisms raised in the first, they can also be seen to modify and nuance the extremely negative, critical position initially adopted by the paper in relation to the festival project, a trend which continues in LC's subsequent coverage.

Throughout its subsequent coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*, LC seeks to legitimise its 'critical' (in the sense of analytical and evaluative) approach to the festival project and its inclusion of numerous, highly 'critical' (in the sense of a specifically negative evaluation) externally produced texts in relation to the festival through representing

¹⁸⁹ Original emphasis, Jean GOTT VALES, 'FAUT-IL CRAINDRE MELANESIA 2000 ?', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 81, 03-09/09/1975, 5.

¹⁹⁰ Pierre Maresca, 'EDITORIAL – L'ARTISTE', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 5.

¹⁹¹ See 'melanesia 2000 - L'OPPOSITION BENEFIQUE ENTRE DEUX CULTURES', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 2, 22/02/1975, 12-13; 'melanesia 2000 - RENOUVEAU CULTUREL par la PRISE de CONSCIENCE', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 3, 26/02/1975, 12-13.

itself as a medium and bastion of (the Western liberal values of) free speech and public debate in New Caledonia, particularly given the overwhelming exclusion of dissenting and marginal voices by the ‘mainstream’ (so-called ‘consensual’) press. Indeed, the postulated value of ‘criticism’, which is represented by LC as performing a necessary, positive and didactic function within society, is itself used in the discourse of this publication to legitimate its coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*.

The valorisation of critical debate in relation to *Mélanésie 2000* is reinforced and the paper’s adoption of a purportedly ‘balanced’, ‘open-ended’ form of argumentation continued in the last two substantial articles written and published by LC on the festival in the period leading up to the main festival in September.¹⁹² Indeed, the headline (which also appears on the paper’s front page) of the first of these articles, published at the end of May, is constituted by the declaration: ‘*OUI À MÉLANÉSIA 2000 ET À SA CRITIQUE*’.¹⁹³ In the course of this article, LC represents its approach to covering and evaluating the festival as being characterised by: ‘*un dialogue qui respectera la nature de chacun et nous fera mieux connaître comme nous sommes : différents et égaux*’.¹⁹⁴

In this article, LC confirms its agreement with those who claim that *Mélanésie 2000* will be ‘*un Festival de culture colonisée, quasiment à la gloire du colonisateur*’, but affirms the appropriate nature of this, ‘*dans la mesure où une entreprise culturelle se donne pour objet de refléter la réalité, plaisante ou déplaisante*’.¹⁹⁵ The paper maintains in this connection that: ‘*[l]’expression canaque n’aurait pu être pure qu’avant la colonisation. Elle ne sera décolonisée spectaculairement que par le spectacle de sa décolonisation*’.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² ‘melanesia 2000 – OUI À MÉLANÉSIA 2000 ET À SA CRITIQUE’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 20, 22-29/05/1975, 11; ‘MELANESIA 2000 SUR LA BONNE VOIE’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 24, 17-23/07/1975, 3.

¹⁹³ ‘oui à Mélanésie 2.000 et à sa critique’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 20, 22-29/05/1975, 1.

¹⁹⁴ ‘melanesia 2000 – OUI À MÉLANÉSIA 2000 ET À SA CRITIQUE’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 20, 22-29/05/1975, 11.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ This last sentence, which uses the rhetorical figure of chiasmus, is similar in form to a construction which appeared in an earlier article on *Mélanésie 2000* published in the third issue of LC, although the

Indeed, while LC contends that *Mélanésie 2000*'s ultimate 'success' (which, it maintains, cannot be judged simply on the basis of its inevitable popular success)¹⁹⁷ '*ne s'évaluera que secondairement, par le degré d'influence sur les mémoires individuelles et collectives*',¹⁹⁸ the paper clearly pronounces itself in favour of *Mélanésie 2000*, regardless of its ultimate 'success', by reason of the critical debate and reflection it is seen to have necessarily engendered within the Kanak community and within New Caledonian society more broadly. Consequently, the paper affirms that: '*il vaut mieux un Mélanésie 2000 raté que pas de Mélanésie 2000 du tout et qu'il vaut mieux un Mélanésie 2000 de colonisés que des colonisés sans Mélanésie 2000.*'¹⁹⁹ This article concludes with the following affirmation:

[d]ans tous les cas *Mélanésie 2000* fera avancer la conscience politique calédonienne : En montrant au canaque le spectacle de sa colonisation achevée, en rappelant à l'occidental la persistance d'une civilisation authentique, en révélant à l'étranger l'existence de « quelque chose » en Nouvelle-Calédonie.²⁰⁰

It is important to highlight that this passage leaves no doubt as to the specifically *political* nature and significance of *Mélanésie 2000* as it is discursively represented by LC.

two constructions have a different semantic thrust. The relevant passage of the earlier article runs: '[a]ussi grand et fatal qu'il puisse être, ce spectacle d'aujourd'hui ne sera pas la vie mélanésienne d'autrefois. Mais la vie mélanésienne moderne ne sera jamais grande sans le spectacle de son ancienne totalité.' 'melanesia 2000 - RENOUVEAU CULTUREL par la PRISE de CONSCIENCE', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 3, 26/02/1975, 12.

¹⁹⁷ As seen below, *Mélanésie 2000*'s overall 'success' is often judged on the basis of its popular success (that is, the number of spectators) in the coverage published by the two local daily publications.

¹⁹⁸ 'melanesia 2000 – OUI À MÉLANÉSIA 2000 ET À SA CRITIQUE', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 20, 22-29/05/1975, 11.

¹⁹⁹ Chiasmus is again used by LC in this passage. The repeated use of this rhetorical figure might be viewed as an attempt to emphasise and to reinforce the publication's thesis in relation to *Mélanésie 2000* and socio-cultural 'realities' in the context of colonial New Caledonia, which are represented as inescapably and irreducibly contradictory. Grosse and Seibold identify '*la concordance entre le style et son objet (ou sujet)*' as itself being an '*ancien précepte rhétorique*': Grosse and Seibold (1994: 50).

²⁰⁰ 'melanesia 2000 – OUI À MÉLANÉSIA 2000 ET À SA CRITIQUE', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 20, 22-29/05/1975, 11.

The last significant text written and published by LC on *Mélanésie 2000* in the period leading up to the main festival appears in July and further confirms the publication's (critical and qualified) support for the festival.²⁰¹ While LC reaffirms its caution and doubts in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*'s upcoming main festival, it identifies the mini-festivals as '*des réussites*', by reason of their 'customary' inscription (as discussed previously).²⁰²

The three items on *Mélanésie 2000* which appear in the edition of LC that was in print on the day of the main festival's public opening ceremony (being dated 28 August to 3 September) are all highly critical of the festival.²⁰³ These items can consequently be seen to deviate from critical but broadly positive and supportive position which had predominated LC's coverage of the festival in the period leading up to the main festival and, indeed, the paper's highly positive appraisal of the main festival in its subsequent coverage. For example, in the (unsigned) editorial published on the front page of this edition, *Mélanésie 2000* is represented (and dismissed) as just another 'entertainment' designed and used strategically within the prevailing Western capitalist system of exploitation and socio-economic organisation in New Caledonia to 'divert' and placate the working masses:

[a]près Guam, *Mélanésie 2000*. A peine des jeux finissent-ils, d'autres vont commencer. Nous n'avons jamais été autant amusés que depuis que nous sommes aussi exploités : « Donnez leur des jeux et laissez leur du pain, ils nous flanqueront la paix ». ²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ 'MELANESIA 2000 SUR LA BONNE VOIE', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 24, 17-23/07/1975, 3.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ 'LE PROGRES TECHNIQUE AU SECOURS DE LA CULTURE KANAKE (une production *Mélanésie 2000*)', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 30, 28/08-03/09/1975, 1; EDITORIAL', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 30, 28/08-03/09/1975, 1; 'ANCETRE DU FESTIVAL « MELANESIA 2000 » : L'EXPOSITION [sic] COLONIALE DE 1931.', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 30, 28/08-03/09/1975, 4-5.

²⁰⁴ 'EDITORIAL', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 30, 28/08-03/09/1975, 1. Note that the South Pacific Games were held in Guam in August 1975. This reference to the strategy '*du pain et des jeux*' (purportedly used to ensure control of the masses in ancient Rome) also appeared in the anti-*Mélanésie 2000* tract released by the *Groupe 1878*. However, in contrast to the critique articulated by the *Groupe 1878*, the particular position of Kanak people in the specifically colonial, Western capitalist context of New Caledonia, and the particular significance of *Mélanésie 2000* for Kanak people as a result, is passed over in silence by LC

As noted previously, editorial columns have particularly significant symbolic and discursive positions and functions in the overall context of any particular print media publication. The critique of *Mélanésie 2000* in this editorial is, however, articulated almost in passing.

In contrast, and despite certain persisting criticisms, LC again articulates a broadly positive perspective in relation to the festival in its next issue (no. 31) – that which was in print throughout the remainder of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival (being dated 4 to 10 September). The two-part, chiasmic headline of the front-page article published in this edition runs: '*Les Canaques sont morts. Vive le Kanak !*'²⁰⁵ This headline plays on the saying, '*Le roi est mort, vive le roi !*',²⁰⁶ defined in *Le Nouveau Petit Robert* as meaning effectively '*vive son successeur*'.²⁰⁷ LC thus positions itself as being in favour of this posited, positive change from '*les Canaques*' to '*le Kanak*'. The shift from the plural to the singular implicitly represents *Mélanésie 2000* as the means through which a plural, dispersed group is transformed or transforms itself into a socio-cultural (and potentially 'political', in a broad sense) unity.²⁰⁸ The (at least potential) political implications of this shift are implicitly expressed through the change in orthography from '*Canaque*' to '*Kanak*', given the recent appropriation and valorisation of the term '*canaque*', and its even more recent orthographic transformation and effective 'de-gallicisation' to

in its editorial, which critiques *Mélanésie 2000* solely in relation to capitalist exploitation of an undifferentiated group of 'exploited' individuals in New Caledonia. It might also be noted that the '*panem et circenses*' strategy was also referred to in a letter to the editor published in March by LC, which asked whether or not the '*crédits exorbitants*' provided by the administration for the festival '*n'ont surtout pour but, selon la technique éprouvée du « Panem et circenses » que de couvrir les rumeurs du mécontentement local*': *Les Calédoniens*, no. 5, 05/03/1975, 13.

²⁰⁵ 'MELANESIA 2000 – Les Canaques sont morts. Vive le Kanak !', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 31, 04-10/09/1975, 1.

²⁰⁶ As highlighted by LC itself in a later article defending this headline and the paper's coverage of the festival in response to criticisms made by LJC. Jean-Paul Caillard, 'LES FASCISTES DE SALON', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 33, 18-24/09/1975, 2.

²⁰⁷ Rey-Debove and Rey (1993: 2316).

²⁰⁸ This was expressly confirmed in a later article: Jean-Paul Caillard, 'LES FASCISTES DE SALON', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 33, 18-24/09/1975, 2.

'Kanak', initiated by the radical Kanak groups actively engaged in the local political domain in favour of decolonisation and Kanak independence.²⁰⁹

LC also mobilises the specifically Kanak metaphor of the *case* in this article to describe the festival and to represent figuratively the newly created 'Kanak' identity and socio-cultural unity:

*Mélanésie 2000 c'est le moment privilégié où les forces contradictoires, telles les poutres opposées réunies au sommet de la case pour équilibrer le tout mais reposant à la base chacune sur un clan différent.*²¹⁰

This characterisation of *Mélanésie 2000* as a significant event engendering a new form of social, cultural and political Kanak unity is, moreover, increasingly foregrounded by LC subsequent to this edition.

Nevertheless, in this article in issue 31, the paper opens by affirming that: '*Mélanésie 2000 va se dérouler cette semaine dans la plus claire ambiguïté.*'²¹¹ Contradiction and oppositions are emphasised and given a particularly privileged and valorised position in the discourse elaborated by LC in this article, according to which contradictions are not only inherent to social 'reality', but also constitute the very motor for change and development within human societies. LC consequently proclaims *Mélanésie 2000* to be a 'success' by reason of its own apparent, inherent contradictions.²¹²

²⁰⁹ Note in this connection that in its coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* prior to this point LC tends to use predominantly the terms '*mélanésien*' and '*canaque*', although certain other orthographical variations of '*canaque*' do appear intermittently (such as, for example, '*Kanques*'). '*Autochtone*' is also used, but only rarely. Subsequent to this headline in issue number 31, the term '*canaque*' does not appear in LC's coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*, except in one article signed by Jean-Paul Caillard. Otherwise, LC uses '*mélanésien*' and '*kanak*' (both capitalised and uncapitalised, and in some cases made to agree in number and gender while remaining invariable in others). In issues 32 and 33, the term '*premiers occupants*' is also used by LC. Both before and after this article in issue 31, LC appears to reproduce 'external' texts faithfully – for instance, '*kanak*' (agreeing in number and gender) appears in texts originally produced by the *Groupe 1878* and the *Foulards Rouges*, that are often signed '*Kanakement vôtre*' or '*vôtres*': '*melanesia 2000*', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 4, 01/03/1975, 12-13; '*DISSOLUTION DES FOULARDS ROUGES*', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 8, 15/03/1975, 7.

²¹⁰ 'MELANESIA 2000 – Les Canaques sont morts. Vive le Kanak!', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 31, 04-10/09/1975, 1.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid. LC gives a number of 'examples' of these contradictions, which include notably certain contradictions identified in the *jeu scénique* (particularly its last *tableau*), as discussed further below. This

However, the principal article on *Mélanésie 2000* published in the following edition (the first to have been produced subsequent to the main festival) demonstrates a shift away from this previous emphasis on the inherent contradictions of *Mélanésie 2000*. Rather, the festival is judged in this article as having been a (virtually complete) ‘success’, being described in the headline as: ‘*LE GRAND RASSEMBLEMENT DE L’HISTOIRE KANAK*’.²¹³ Moreover, as discussed further below, in an article published in its next edition entitled ‘*vers un regroupement melanésien [sic] ?*’, LC directly links *Mélanésie 2000* and its aims with Kanak socio-cultural unity and with the political Kanak independence movement and *revendication*, all of which are represented positively and supported in this text.²¹⁴ No other local print-media publication explicitly draws this link in its contemporaneous coverage of the festival between, on the one hand, *Mélanésie 2000* and the engagement of its Kanak organisers and participants and, on the other, the burgeoning political movement in favour of Kanak independence.

***Mélanésie 2000*’s inherently political objectives and message in the local print-media coverage of the festival**

Treatment of the festival’s objectives and message (that is, its particular politics of Kanak culture and identity), particularly in reference to the various documents and elements of the festival through which they were primarily articulated by the Organising Committee in the local public domain,²¹⁵ varied considerably from newspaper to

emphasis on contradictions, particularly those inherent in and made apparent by *Mélanésie 2000*, is further reinforced by the accompanying satirical cartoon, in the form of an anthropological diagram-cum-advertising catalogue, which, appearing above the second part of its headline (‘*Vive le Kanak !*’), can be seen to depict ‘*le Kanak*’ of or emerging from *Mélanésie 2000*. It depicts a Kanak man in ‘traditional’ dress (complete with wristwatch), accompanied by a number of satirical ‘explanatory’ labels providing details in relation to different features of his attire, where each item can be purchased and at what price. This cartoon was subsequently reproduced in *Mwà Vée*, no. 10, Septembre 1995, 48.

²¹³ ‘MELANESIA 2000: LE GRAND RASSEMBLEMENT DE L’HISTOIRE KANAK’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 32, 11-17/09/1975, 1.

²¹⁴ ‘vers un regroupement melanésien [sic] ?’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 33, 18-24/09/1975, 1, 5.

²¹⁵ A list of these documents and elements is provided at the beginning of this Chapter.

newspaper and changed through time, from the festival's first appearance as a local news item in July 1974 to the last articles on the festival published in September 1975.

It is worth recalling that the festival's Organising Committee specifically targeted the local media in relation to the festival project as one means of 'communicating' *Mélanésie 2000*'s message to the New Caledonian public at large. Only approximately 2 000 Kanak people ultimately participated in the main festival as members of the regional delegations. However, *Mélanésie 2000*'s regional mini-festivals, the collaboration of various existing Kanak associations and networks, and the '*démarche coutumier*' adopted by the Organising Committee all contributed to the diffusion of information on *Mélanésie 2000* (including its expressed objectives and message) within Kanak communities throughout the *Grande Terre* and the islands. The number of participants and spectators at each of the regional mini-festivals is unknown. The number of entrants during the main festival was totalled by LNC at 36 000 and by LFA at 50 000.²¹⁶ However, the breakdown of the background or origins (local, metropolitan or foreign; Kanak, 'European', Wallisian, etc.) of the spectators at the main festival (or, indeed, at each of the mini-festivals) is unknown. Nevertheless, it is clear that the entire Kanak and non-Kanak population of New Caledonia (or even of the greater Noumea area) did not attend one or more of the *Mélanésie 2000*-related events, including the September main festival. It is also unlikely that those people who did attend the main festival as spectators were present for the entire duration of the event.

Particularly given that the majority of the publications produced by the Organising Committee 'explaining' the festival's objectives and message were only available to the public during the main festival at the festival site, and that attendance was necessary to see the *jeu scénique* (Missotte gives the number of spectators at the two performances of the *jeu scénique* as 10 000 and 12 000 respectively)²¹⁷ and to hear the public discourses pronounced during the opening and closing ceremonies, the local media coverage of

²¹⁶ '36 000 ENTRÉES À MÉLANÉSIA 2000', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/09/1975, 1; '50.000 SPECTATEURS à Mélanésie 2000', *La France Australe*, 08/09/1975, 1.

²¹⁷ Missotte (1995b: 92).

Mélanésie 2000 can be seen to have constituted the primary means through which the project's objectives and message could be communicated to those who did not attend the main festival (particularly members of the local non-Kanak population) and who had not attended any regional mini-festivals or been otherwise associated with or informed of the project. As a consequence, the degree to which certain objectives of the festival had the potential to be attained and its message the potential to be 'received' would appear to have been to some extent dependent on the nature of the treatment of the festival in the local media, including the written press.

The following discussion focuses on the coverage (or otherwise) in the local written press of two important elements of the *Mélanésie 2000* project in which its inherently political objectives and message can be identified: *Mélanésie 2000*'s logo; and the *jeu scénique*, particularly in the context of the newspapers' broader coverage of the main festival. The treatment of the 'traditional' Kanak *cases* constructed on the main-festival site is also considered in connection with the symbolism of *Mélanésie 2000*'s logo.

The political message of *Mélanésie 2000*'s logo, echoed in the construction of 'traditional' Kanak *cases* on the main-festival site, in the local written press

The design of *Mélanésie 2000*'s logo was finalised in late 1974, at which time it appears to have been distributed to local newspapers.²¹⁸ The logo was printed on documents produced by the Organising Committee,²¹⁹ as well as on festival merchandise.²²⁰ On Missotte's account, the logo of the festival '*devait symboliser ses objectifs et surtout l'idée de reconquête de la dignité.*'²²¹ In its final form, the black-and-white logo was constituted by a '*flèche faîtière*' held by two black hands and forearms and framed by a flaming disc, representing the sun. However, according to

²¹⁸ See 'L'EMBLEME DU FESTIVAL MELANESIA 2.000', *La France Australe*, 21/12/1974, 24.

²¹⁹ Two notable examples are the programs for the mini-festivals and on the front cover of the main festival's Festival Program.

²²⁰ Examples include the festival T-shirts, stickers and official festival stamps and envelopes.

²²¹ Missotte (1985: 437).

Missotte, the original design of the logo (which was created by a graphic designer on the basis of a number of ideas formulated by the Organising Committee) had the *flèche faïtière* being held by one black and one white arm.²²² Missotte maintains that the Organising Committee decided the *flèche faïtière* should be raised by two black arms.²²³ Kanak agency was consequently clearly represented and affirmed in the festival's logo.

The choice of the symbol of the *flèche faïtière* is also particularly significant. A *flèche faïtière* is a bas-relief sculpture generally associated with the 'traditional' Kanak '*grande case*' of the *chef*,²²⁴ a figure who is symbolically positioned at the apex of the 'traditional' Kanak socio-political structure ordering human relations and interactions within a specific community (and, indeed, ordering their built and lived environment), perpetuated by and through '*la parole*' – the 'oral tradition' of the group. Thus, the *grande case* has been identified as 'traditionally' symbolising the figures of the *chef* and the '*frère aîné*' (the original ancestor of the group), and consequently the continuity²²⁵ and legitimacy of the community's (hierarchically ordered) implantation and authority (or 'power') in a particular geographical area. The *grande case* also symbolises the established socio-political order (including the specific relationships between different people and groups within the community as a whole) through its architectural structure.²²⁶ Implicating all groups in its construction and having a unified, singular form, the *grande case* consequently also symbolises the socio-political 'consensus' and stability posited to exist within the society in question.²²⁷ The *flèche faïtière* sculpture, which is positioned at the very summit of such *grandes cases*, can itself be seen to

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Boulay (1990b: 100).

²²⁵ Note that there is no strict division constructed between the past and the present, Kanak ancestors being present and active in the contemporary world.

²²⁶ See particularly Tjibaou (1975: 34); Bensa (1990b: 19); Boulay (1990a: 102).

²²⁷ See particularly Tjibaou (1975: 34); Bensa (1990b: 19).

represent the *grande case* metonymically. Moreover, the *flèche faïtière* is associated particularly with the ancestor figure(s) of the community in question.²²⁸

The fact that, in 1975 as today, the *flèche faïtière* is a particularly distinctive and readily recognisable 'traditional' Kanak sculptural form could be seen to explain the choice of this sculpture to symbolise Kanak culture and identity in *Mélanésie 2000*'s official logo, particularly from the perspective of those unaware of its specific, 'traditional' symbolism and associations. However, it is clear that this choice was also made in reference to the 'traditional' Kanak symbolism of the *flèche faïtière* and the *grande case* indicated broadly above. Through their symbolic representation in the festival's logo, Kanak culture and identity can be seen to have been imbued with their broader, socio-political dimensions.

The symbolism of *Mélanésie 2000*'s logo also needs to be understood in relation to the continuing legacies of the official colonial period, including in particular the systematic destruction of the *grande case*, a strong symbol of Kanak presence in and established authority over specific territories, in many regions of the *Grande Terre* during that period.²²⁹ The logo's symbolism in this regard is also linked to the attempted suppression of various cultural practices by missionaries and the colonial authorities during the official colonial period, and the 'hidden' nature of many persisting Kanak cultural practices and forms of expression from an 'external' perspective.²³⁰ Through the logo's symbolic resurrection of the *flèche faïtière* and the *grande case*, and the proud affirmation in the clear light of day of Kanak culture and identity being effected

²²⁸ Bensa (1990a: 31); Boulay (1990b: 103). According to Boulay, '*dans la maison, on considérera que haut et centre sont les lieux du chef et, plus précisément, le haut, la flèche faïtière celui du chef mort tandis que le centre, poteau central, celui du chef vivant*': Boulay (1990b: 103). The symbolism of the '*poteau central*' is discussed further in later chapters.

²²⁹ See Bensa (1990a: 49); Boulay (1990b: 13). On Boulay's account, through the combined impact of the influence of missionaries and '*hygénistes*' on Kanak housing, on the one hand, and the devastation of Kanak villages in the course of military operations of colonial repression in which Kanak *cases* (particularly *grandes cases*) were set alight, on the other, the 'traditional' *grande case*, as the '*symbole de l'autorité locale*', had practically disappeared from the *Grande Terre* by the end of the 19th century.

²³⁰ This might be seen to have resulted in part from the various strategies of survival adopted by Kanak people and groups (discussed above), and in part from the largely persisting segregation of Kanak and non-Kanak populations living in the country.

by a Kanak individual therein, *Mélanésie 2000*'s logo can be seen to declare and assert the dignity and presence of Kanak people collectively and to represent a powerful statement of the Kanak *revendication* of cultural, social and, indeed, political 'decolonisation'.²³¹

It is worth noting that certain similarities exist between *Mélanésie 2000*'s logo and the flag which would be created a decade later by the FLNKS for the independent Kanak nation of Kanaky, raised for the first time on the 1 December 1984. This flag also features a yellow disc, representing the sun, within which is silhouetted another *flèche faïtière*. Thus, as noted by Kasarhérou and Klein in the official ADCK guidebook to the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou*'s '*aire coutumière*' (published in 2000), the *flèche faïtière* '*a été choisie comme emblème du pays kanak dans son ensemble*'.²³² This provides a clear example of the adoption and mobilisation of the 'traditional' Kanak *case*, particularly the *grande case* with its *flèche faïtière*, by the Kanak pro-independence movement as a symbol of their overall political project and *revendication*. This was interlinked to the emergence during the 1970s and 1980s of the Kanak *case* as a strong symbol and element of the Kanak cultural 'revival' and the positive affirmation and *revendication* of Kanak culture and identity. *Mélanésie 2000* itself has been identified by several authors as having played a key role in the re-emergence of this 'cultural' form and symbol throughout the *Grande Terre* in the years following the festival.²³³

²³¹ Many echoes of the symbolism of *Mélanésie 2000*'s logo are apparent in Tjibaou's preface to *Kanaké, Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie*, published in 1976. Tjibaou opens this preface with the following passage: '*Kanaké est un des plus puissants archétypes du Monde Mélanésien. Il est l'ancêtre, le premier-né. Il est la flèche faïtière, le mât central, le sanctuaire de la grande case. Il est la parole qui fait exister les hommes. Cette même parole établit le système d'organisation qui régit les rapports des hommes entre eux et leurs relations avec l'environnement géographique et mythique.*' At the end of this preface, Tjibaou affirms: '*[a]ujourd'hui, Kanaké vient à vous, chargé d'ans et d'histoire, riche d'une expérience culturelle unique. Il réclame sa part de soleil.*' Tjibaou (1978). This *revendication* by the Kanak people of their rightful 'place in the sun' is very clearly expressed visually and symbolically in *Mélanésie 2000*'s logo.

²³² Original emphasis, Kasarhérou and Klein (2000a: 32).

²³³ Recall also that, as discussed in Annex 1, the emergence, particularly from the beginning of the 1980s, of the 'traditional' Kanak *case* as a symbol closely associated with the active *revendication* and occupation of specific lands by specific Kanak groups throughout the *Grande Terre* was interrelated to these other developments.

As a result of this broader context and history, the Kanak *case* and its symbolism are particularly significant for all of the ‘cultural’ events studied in this thesis. However, the ‘traditional’ *case* and its symbolism were articulated and mobilised strategically in different ways in each case. As seen in the relevant chapters, the links identifiable between the symbolism of the Kanak *case* mobilised in each case and certain political *revendications*, projects and perspectives also differ.

In the context specific to *Mélanésie 2000*, the festival’s logo can be seen to symbolise and affirm Kanak presence (past, present and future), Kanak socio-cultural unity and Kanak collective agency (particularly through the fact that a single Kanak figure is depicted as raising a single *flèche faïtière*).²³⁴ By reason of the ‘traditional’ symbolism of the *grande case*, this symbolic representation of Kanak presence, unity and agency might also be seen to imply and posit a socio-political ‘consensus’ within the Kanak population as a whole, and (similar to the FLNKS/Kanaky flag created a decade later) to symbolise, express and advocate an inherently political, Kanak-centred and defined ‘*projet de société*’ for the future.

However, despite the significance and implications of the design of *Mélanésie 2000*’s logo, there is no expressed indication or discussion of its symbolism in any of the four print-media publications analysed in this study. While the logo’s symbolism does not appear to have been addressed and explained directly in any of the publications produced for the public by *Mélanésie 2000*’s Organising Committee itself, given the inclusion in those publications of extensive discussion (and reiteration) of the reasons for and objectives of the festival project, combined with several explanations of the

²³⁴ This is not diminished by the fact that the *flèche faïtière* in the logo is based on those typical to a particular region (there being many different types and variants throughout the New Caledonian archipelago). Based on the images and information provided by Boulay, it appears that the *flèche faïtière* in *Mélanésie 2000*’s logo was based on those found in the ‘*paici*’ culturo-linguistic region (Koné–Touho–Ponérihouen); Boulay (1990a: 114–117); Boulay (1990b: 104–105). In a similar manner, the ‘traditional’ Kanak ‘foundational myth’ of *Kanaké* appropriated by Tjibaou and the festival’s organisers was also used to represent and symbolise Kanak people collectively in the main festival’s *jeu scénique* and the book *Kanaké, Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie*, despite the original provenance of this myth and figure from a particular socio-cultural region (being, moreover, the same region as that from which the design of the *flèche faïtière* in the logo appears to have been sourced).

signification and symbolism of the 'traditional' *grande case* within Kanak society,²³⁵ the Organising Committee can be seen to have provided the keys necessary for the non-Kanak public (and the local written press) to decode the symbolism of *Mélanésie 2000*'s logo.

The logo itself is reproduced on very few occasions in the coverage published by the two daily newspapers and LJC.²³⁶ LC does not include any reproductions of the logo. The powerful symbolism of this logo, with its implications in relation to the social, cultural and political *revendications* and empowerment of Kanak people individually and collectively, is consequently for the most part obscured (and is certainly not foregrounded) in the contemporaneous local written press coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*. On the other hand, it should be recalled that in its coverage of the main festival LC uses the metaphor of the Kanak *case* to describe *Mélanésie 2000* and to represent figuratively the newly created 'Kanak' identity and socio-cultural unity posited by that publication to have been engendered by the festival.²³⁷ In contrast, in the case of the daily newspapers and LJC, obscuring the festival logo and its symbolism might be viewed as part of a broader strategy engaged to occlude the potentially radical political aspects and implications of the *Mélanésie 2000* project.

The press coverage of the construction of the 'traditional' Kanak *cases* on *Mélanésie 2000*'s main-festival site is also worth discussing in this connection. In certain regards, the physical construction of these *cases* can be seen to echo (and very partially give effect to) the symbolic representation in the festival logo of the project's objectives and message. An awareness of the 'traditional' symbolism of Kanak *cases* and the

²³⁵ See, for example, Tjibaou (1975).

²³⁶ Except for one occasion in December 1974 in LFA, the logo is only reproduced incidentally by these papers (predominantly in their coverage of/publicity for *Mélanésie 2000* merchandise). The one exception is a short article entitled 'L'EMBLEME DU FESTIVAL MELANESIA 2.000' in which the image of the logo was reproduced with a brief caption that does not touch on its symbolism or the reasons for its selection – rather, this article notes the Organising Committee's plans for *Mélanésie 2000* merchandise: 'L'EMBLEME DU FESTIVAL MELANESIA 2.000', *La France Australe*, 21/12/1974, 24.

²³⁷ 'MELANESIA 2000 – Les Canaques sont morts. Vive le Kanak !', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 31, 04-10/09/1975, 1.

symbolism of their contemporary construction in light of their destruction throughout the *Grande Terre* during the colonial period has been retrospectively identified by various commentators as having existed at the time of *Mélanésie 2000* (and so as having informing the actions and perceptions of the festival's participants), or as having arisen subsequent to and, in part, by reason of the festival.²³⁸

However, in the local written press coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* the construction of the 'traditional' Kanak *cases* by the different regional delegations on the main-festival site was not identified or foregrounded as particularly significant, even at the level of the *revendication*, affirmation and valorisation of Kanak culture and identity. Indeed, the treatment of the construction of Kanak *cases* on the main-festival site by the two daily newspapers and LJC can be seen to have worked to effectively diminish, if not entirely occlude, the potentially powerful, highly political symbolism and implications of these 'traditional' constructions.²³⁹ This is illustrated by the nature of the coverage in these newspapers of the completion and 'inauguration' of the different *cases* on the main-festival site in the lead up to the event.²⁴⁰

²³⁸ For example, Missotte subsequently affirmed that '[l]es constructeurs de cases transportaient consciemment leur civilisation aux portes de Nouméa et ils le savaient.' Missotte (1985: 450). This view was reiterated in similar terms by Missotte in 1995, at which time he added that the construction of the 'traditional' *cases* on the main-festival site represented an important means for the Kanak people involved not only to 'prove' the continuity and persistence of their cultural practices and knowledge, but also to 'prove' that '[l]a case était présente, érigée, dans le cœur des canaques': Missotte (199b5: 80).

²³⁹ LC was almost entirely silent on the subject of the construction of 'traditional' *cases* on the main-festival site. However, the comments made above in relation to its failure to include any reproductions or treatment of the festival logo are equally applicable here.

²⁴⁰ Note that in the wake of the main festival these *cases* are also discussed in the press in relation to their future use (and, indeed, their legal and 'customary' 'ownership'), discussed previously, as well as in relation to the alleged attempted arson of one of the *cases* on the evening of the 7 September, discussed below. In the two daily newspapers' coverage of the fire incident, the significance of these 'traditional' constructions from a Kanak 'customary' perspective is indirectly made apparent or directly acknowledged in a very general manner. Particular emphasis is placed by LNC on the attempted arson of the *case* and its grave nature from a Kanak 'customary' perspective. However, LNC's broad acknowledgement of the 'customary' importance and significance of Kanak *cases* in this connection is geared towards emphasising the serious nature of this incident (and consequently of the inter-Kanak conflict concerning the festival the fire incident is constructed by the newspaper to represent), rather than towards emphasising the potential or actual significance and implications (of a social, cultural and/or political nature) of the construction of these 'traditional' *cases* for *Mélanésie 2000* beyond the 'Kanak world'. Although the fire incident is raised by LJC in an interview with Tjibaou, the special significance of these 'traditional' constructions is not raised or discussed in that connection: see 'L'Avocat du diable à cœur

LNC includes numerous articles on the completion of these *cases*. The majority of these articles note: the number of people and the number of days taken to construct the *cases*; the materials used and their source; the individual(s) under whose direction the construction was undertaken; and the ‘*pot*’ to celebrate their ‘inauguration’. Thus, on Missotte’s analysis: ‘*le stéréotype alcool et manifestation profane tend à ramener l’événement à une dimension plus habituelle aux lecteurs.*’²⁴¹ Kanak ‘*coutume*’ and/or ‘*tradition*’ are mentioned in only four of these articles, and then only summarily.²⁴² The following passage appears in an article on the official visit of the members of the Municipality of Noumea to the main-festival’s site in mid-August:

*[u]ne parenthèse pour signaler que la case du Sud a failli être brûlée et détruite avant-hier par ceux qui l’avaient construite : quelqu’un avait en effet pris des photographies de cette construction mélanésienne sans se présenter aux « anciens », ce qui est la moindre des politesses. La coutume n’ayant pas été respectée, les constructeurs de la case voulaient y mettre le feu, et il a fallu toute la persuasion des organisateurs pour la sauver.*²⁴³

There is no further comment on or explanation of this incident. Consequently, ‘*la coutume*’ remains an opaque, catch-all category effectively signifying Kanak ‘difference’ to the ‘European’ ‘norm’. There is certainly no indication in this article of the nature of and reasons for the particular importance and signification of the ‘traditional’ *case* in Kanak ‘culture’.

ouvert avec : Jean-Marie Tjibaou’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, 17-23/09/1975, 5. The coverage of this incident in LNC, LFA and LC is discussed further below.

²⁴¹ Missotte (1985 : 490).

²⁴² ‘A MELANESIA 2000 – LA CASE DE MARE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/08/1975, 6 ; ‘POUR MELANESIA 2000 LES DEUX CASES DE KONE SONT TERMINEES’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 07/08/1975, 5; ‘UN PILOU POUR LA FINITION DE LA CASE DE TIGA’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/08/1975, 3; ‘La municipalité visite le site de « MELANESIA 2000 » ET FECILITE LES ORGANISATEURS’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/08/1975, 2.

²⁴³ Original emphasis, ‘La municipalité visite le site de « MELANESIA 2000 » ET FECILITE LES ORGANISATEURS’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/08/1975, 2.

Indeed, only on one occasion is this question raised in these articles published by LNC, when the newspaper affirms that: '[d]ans le contexte mélanésien, la case est le symbole de l'implantation de l'art et de la culture.'²⁴⁴ This brief statement can be seen to substantially diminish and, indeed, effectively misrepresent and occlude the inherently political significance and symbolism of the 'traditional' *case* in Kanak 'culture'.²⁴⁵ This statement also occludes the highly political symbolism of the construction of these 'traditional' *cases* on the main-festival site in the ('colonial'/'post-colonial') New Caledonian context in 1975.

LFA contains comparatively few articles relating to the construction and 'inauguration' of the 'traditional' *cases* on *Mélanésie 2000*'s main-festival site. These articles make no reference to and do not discuss the 'customary' inscription of this process. Nor do they indicate the importance and signification of the 'traditional' *case* in Kanak 'culture' or in the contemporary New Caledonian context in light of colonisation. On the other hand, it is worth noting that one article published by LFA in relation to the work of a Kanak sculptor, Marcel Némembreux, in preparation for the Canala mini-festival, includes an extended quotation from Némembreux in which the symbolism and significance of the *grande case* from the perspective of Kanak people from the Canala

²⁴⁴ 'POUR MELANESIA 2000 LES DEUX CASES DE KONE SONT TERMINEES', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 07/08/1975, 5. Another passage in this article, referring to the way in which the cases were physically constructed, can be seen to represent Kanak 'tradition' in a highly reductive and oversimplified manner. The paper states: '[a]ucun élément métallique (cou, vis, rivet ou autre) n'est entré dans la construction : la tradition a donc été respectée.'

²⁴⁵ Moreover, it is worth noting that Tjibaou maintained in an interview in 1985 that the concept of 'art' as it has developed in the Western discursive tradition does not have any equivalent in the context of 'traditional' Kanak 'culture'. Thus, Tjibaou affirms that the 'European' distinction between 'l'art' and 'l'artisanat' does not exist in 'la logique de la société traditionnelle', which recognises rather a distinction between 'le sacré', or 'l'objet auquel on a donné une certaine consécration', and 'le quotidien', or 'l'objet usuel'. Tjibaou (1996: 194). The 'traditional' Kanak *grande case* might be viewed as falling largely into the former category (although this distinction drawn by Tjibaou is not itself a strict delimitation between hermetically sealed categories). Thus, according Tjibaou in the text published at the end of *Mélanésie 2000*'s Festival Program, the 'traditional' *grande case* 'considérée comme le symbole de l'ancêtre est entourée de sacré. En effet, cette case est le lieu où descendent les esprits des ancêtres. Là habite le chef, le grand frère, le verbe du clan.' In this text Tjibaou thus also links the *grande case* symbolically to 'la parole', which he identifies as 'la parole génératrice et vivifiante du clan' and as the means of encoding and perpetuating within any given Kanak community its particular socio-political organisational structure, and of therefore ensuring its survival. Tjibaou (1975: 34).

region, particularly in the context of that region's colonisation, is clearly expressed.²⁴⁶ However, LFA does not discuss or explore the issues and themes raised in this quotation, either in this article or in any of its other articles in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*.

LJC includes only one short piece in relation to the construction of these *cases* on the main-festival site, in which a photograph of a group of people in front of a *case* is reproduced with the caption: '[*Les dernières cases sont installées depuis la semaine dernière, et tout est maintenant prêt pour le grand démarrage de « Mélanésie 2000 »*']'.²⁴⁷ In their respective coverage of the *cases* constructed on *Mélanésie 2000*'s main-festival site, the two daily newspapers and LJC can consequently all be seen to diminish or occlude the important symbolic, socio-political and cultural signification of these constructions in both the 'traditional' Kanak context and in the contemporary context of a colonised New Caledonia, in keeping with their treatment of the festival's logo.

Treatment of the *jeu scénique* in the coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival

Mélanésie 2000's *jeu scénique*, performed on the Friday and Saturday evenings of the September main festival,²⁴⁸ can be identified as a highly significant element of the

²⁴⁶ See 'MINI-FESTIVAL DES ARTS MÉLANÉSIENS DE CANALA, de notre correspondante Mme LINON', *La France Australe*, 15/05/1975, 24. In this quotation, Némembreux clearly identifies the symbolism of the Kanak *grande case* with the *chef*, with the '*organisation sociale*' of the group and with certain alliances between various groups in the region, all of which can be seen to be eminently political in nature, although this political character is not expressly identified. Furthermore, Némembreux constructs the significance and symbolism of the *case* in the contemporary context in reference to the historical context of their disappearance by reason of certain colonial processes (including certain psychological processes within the minds of the colonised akin to those identified by Tjibaou in his 1974 text, the transformation of which was one of the festival's key objectives). The history of colonisation is understood and discursively constructed by Némembreux in this quotation through the prism of the Kanak 'customary' mode of *accueil*, which can also be seen to resonate with the reformulation and transformation of the persisting, present-day colonial dynamic in the last *tableau* of *Mélanésie 2000*'s *jeu scénique*, discussed below and in Annex 3.

²⁴⁷ 'Mélanésie 2000 : tout est prêt', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 80, 27/08-02/09/1975, 6.

²⁴⁸ Missotte maintains that these performances were attended by an audience of 10 000 and 12 000 people respectively: Missotte (1995b: 92). LFA placed the number of spectators at 11 000 at both performances:

festival project, particularly by reason of its links to *Mélanésie 2000*'s objectives and the fact that it effectively incorporated the articulation and physical enactment of the festival's primary message into the main festival as it was directly experienced by participants and attendees.²⁴⁹ The script of the *jeu scénique* (along with a number of accompanying 'explanatory' texts) was also published in the main festival's Festival Program,²⁵⁰ which was distributed to festival ticket holders.²⁵¹

The *jeu scénique* is also particularly important for an analysis of the written press coverage of the main festival and the treatment of *Mélanésie 2000*'s broader implications and significance given that the *jeu scénique* was one of the few means through which the Organising Committee articulated *Mélanésie 2000*'s objectives and message during the main festival to have been treated in the press coverage of the event.²⁵² Furthermore, Missotte maintains that a change is identifiable in the nature of the written press coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* before and after the distribution to the press of the script of the *jeu scénique*, just prior to the main festival's official opening on the 3 September.²⁵³ As seen below, this change is most readily apparent in LNC and LJC.

'MELANESIA 2000 – CE FUT UN SUCCES CONSIDERABLE', *La France Australe*, 08/09/1975, 11. LNC placed it at '*plus de dix mille*', although it is unclear whether this was the figure for one or both performances: 'EXTRAORDINAIRE REUSSITE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/09/1975, 4.

²⁴⁹ Missotte contends that the *jeu scénique* '*donne son sens au Festival*': Missotte (1995b: 92).

²⁵⁰ Dobbelaere and Tjibaou (1975); and see Bonnabesse and Missotte (1975: 15-22).

²⁵¹ Missotte (1995b: 93).

²⁵² Other elements of the Festival Program, the booklet *Vers Mélanésie 2000* and the three editions of the festival newspaper were barely mentioned in the local written press in their coverage of the main festival. Note that all of these documents, like the *jeu scénique* itself, situated *Mélanésie 2000* in a broader historical perspective, explicitly linking the country's colonial past and its continuing impacts and legacies on the Kanak people to the need for the recognition of Kanak 'culture', identity and idigeneity, identified as the means of ensuring harmony and prosperity for all of New Caledonia's inhabitants into the future. As noted previously, there was also very little coverage in the local press of the speeches delivered at the public opening and closing ceremonies of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival.

²⁵³ See Missotte (1985: 490). It appears that the Festival Program was circulated to the press at a press conference held by the festival's Organising committee on the 27 August: 'MELANESIA 2000 LE FESTIVAL DES ARTS MELANESIENS – Le programme détaillé sera publié chaque jour dans la presse', *La France Australe*, 28/08/1975, 5; 'MUSIQUES CANAQUES DE NELLE-CALEDONIE, UN DISQUE NOUVEAU', *La France Australe*, 29/08/1975, 24; 'MUSIQUE MODERNE SIGNEE PIERRE BERNARD POUR MELANESIA 2000', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 30/08/1975, 5. Another factor

In successive acts or '*tableaux*', the *jeu scénique* firstly depicts pre-colonial Kanak life, society and culture, followed by the trauma of colonial domination and the persisting negative impacts of colonisation on Kanak people. However, the *jeu scénique* ends with a projection of and call for the radical transformation – that is, decolonisation – of New Caledonian society and the relationship between the country's indigenous (colonised) people and its established non-indigenous inhabitants (and colonisers). This transformation (and, ultimately, reconciliation) is realised through New Caledonian society's reformulation on Kanak terms through a Kanak 'customary' framework: the 'customary' mode of *accueil*, transposed into a 'national', pan-Kanak register.²⁵⁴ In this manner, a radical shift in the predominant relations of material and symbolic power is brought about and the relative positions occupied subsequent to colonisation by the Kanak people and '*les hommes blancs*' (broadly representing the country's established non-indigenous settler and immigrant population) are transformed and a new (metaphorical) symbolic and material '*partage des ignames*' is instituted. This transformation can be seen to represent the restitution to Kanak people collectively of their position, legitimacy and rights as the original, indigenous inhabitants of the country (its metaphorical 'customary' '*maîtres de la terre*'), and consequently the recognition and restitution of Kanak sovereignty. The way in which this inherently political message is articulated in the *jeu scénique* is discussed in further detail in Annex 3.

It is important to highlight that while the *jeu scénique* included the representation of the 'customary' *accueil* by the Kanak people of the country's established non-indigenous inhabitants, this *accueil* and the concomitant transformation of New Caledonian society was not concretely realised between the relevant communities during or through

may have been the 'round table' organised on local television with various invitees, members of the Organising Committee and Georges Dobbelaere, which appears to have sparked the 'concern' of LJC in relation to the festival project: Jean GOTT VALLES, 'FAUT-IL CRAINDRE MELANESIA 2000 ?', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 81, 03-09/09/1975, 5.

²⁵⁴ See the discussion in the Introduction.

Mélanésie 2000, but only acted out by the (exclusively Kanak) cast of the *jeu scénique* as a means of calling for its realisation in the future.²⁵⁵

In the introductory '*présentation*' of *Mélanésie 2000* published in the Festival Program, the Organising Committee stated that the festival '*est d'abord une rencontre*' between (Kanak) '*clans*' and '*tribus*' from throughout the *Grande Terre* and the islands, but went on to affirm the festival's additional character as an exchange in the 'customary' mode of *accueil* between the Kanak 'hosts' and the non-Kanak 'invitees',²⁵⁶ echoing to a certain extent the last *tableau* of the *jeu scénique*. However, the nature of the participation of the non-Kanak festival attendees remained relatively passive and no active participation of representatives of New Caledonia's non-Kanak communities was incorporated into the official ('public' or 'private') 'customary' ceremonies associated with the festival project.

On the other hand, in his account of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival, Missotte highlights the spontaneous participation of the (multi-ethnic) audience in the dance at the very conclusion of the *jeu scénique*, when:

*la foule se précipita pour se joindre à la danse boria qui, interrompue à la fin du premier tableau par l'arrivée des colonisateurs, reprenait pour la levée du deuil colonial des Canaques, achevait la représentation dans une manifestation réellement populaire de toutes les ethnies confondues.*²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ It is interesting to note in this connection that Missotte suggests that the Organising Committee had tried to find local 'Europeans' to '*jouer le partage offert par les Canaques*', but that this had proven impossible, only two individuals having come forward. Missotte (1995b: 92).

²⁵⁶ The Organising Committee affirms: '[e]nsemble, réunis d'abord pour nous-mêmes, nous avons voulu ce festival comme un de ces premiers pas que fait l'habitant d'un pays quand il devient un hôte, allant au devant des invités, devant le seuil de la maison. Ensemble nous avons voulu ce Festival comme un partage ; dans les fêtes coutumières, chacun apportait sa part d'ignames, aujourd'hui votre part est votre volonté de rencontre, même si nous savons les uns et les autres, qu'elle nous fera découvrir différents, chacun avec nos valeurs et notre manière de vivre.' Le Comité, 'Présentation par le Comité', in Bonnabesse and Missotte (1975: 7).

²⁵⁷ Missotte (1995b: 92). See also Guiart (1996: 109).

According to the *témoignage* of Dobbelaere, this audience participation was not planned or anticipated by the festival's organisers (including himself).²⁵⁸ However, this brief episode does not equate to the fulfilment of the socio-political process and transformation represented and projected in the *jeu scénique*'s last *tableau*.²⁵⁹

As noted above, immediately before the official opening of the main festival a change can be identified in the nature of the local press coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*. The two daily newspapers had previously devoted considerable, overwhelmingly positive attention to the festival project. However, just before the main festival's opening, LNC's coverage became ambivalent and qualified, and a tendency to downplay and depreciate *Mélanésie 2000*'s significance in the New Caledonian cultural and social context can be seen to have emerged from this point. The coverage of LFA at this time became almost entirely devoid of commentary and explanation (notwithstanding a few notable exceptions), being composed predominantly of photographs reproduced en masse. This resulted in LFA's representation of the festival as an event only distinguished by its scale from other Kanak-focused gatherings already held on a regular basis in New Caledonia, such as Church fêtes. The coverage of LJC, which had previously been dismissive and depreciative, now became highly critical.

Writing in 1978, Ismet Kurtovitch maintained that the local 'European' population's overall perception of *Mélanésie 2000* as offering '*rien que nous ne connaissions déjà*' resulted in the (posited) fact that '*les « Calédoniens blancs » à qui cette manifestation était avant tout destiné, ne se sont pas déplacés.*'²⁶⁰ A similar appraisal and analysis was also articulated by Tjibaou in an interview published shortly after the main festival in

²⁵⁸ See his subsequent account: Dobbelaere (1995: 108).

²⁵⁹ In contrast, as discussed in Chapter Three, the event organised around the *Mwâ Kâ* on the 24 September 2005, which was also modelled on the Kanak 'customary' mode of *accueil* and which did incorporate the active participation of representatives from the country's settler and immigrant communities as well as the Kanak, indigenous community, can be seen to have attempted precisely to realise such an *accueil* and an analogous socio-political transformation, although this transformation was framed by and strategically engaged in a different context and for, to a certain extent, different ends.

²⁶⁰ Kurtovitch (1995: 140). Note that the festival project's objectives and message can be seen to have been directed towards the Kanak population as well as the non-Kanak population, and it is questionable whether either of these groups was targeted more than the other.

September 1975 by LJC.²⁶¹ The conservative and ‘mainstream’ local press coverage of the event, particularly in LFA but also in LJC, may to some degree have produced and/or reinforced such a perception and/or result.²⁶² The increasingly positive perspective of LC in relation to *Mélanésie 2000* may also have disinclined the politically conservative, right-wing and anti-independence majority of local ‘Europeans’ from attending the main festival or from accepting its radical political message and implications (particularly subsequent to the festival’s conclusion, when the festival’s message and implications were explicitly associated by LC with the Kanak political *revendication* of independence).

Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes and *La France Australe*

From May 1975 LNC published numerous articles in relation to the preparations for the main festival, particularly its *jeu scénique*.²⁶³ None of the other papers treated in this

²⁶¹ ‘L’avocat du diable à cœur ouvert avec : Jean-Marie Tjibaou’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 4. In this interview, Tjibaou accedes to LJC’s suggestion that the large number of ‘Européens’ present during the festival were, for the most part, ‘Métropolitains’, ‘les Calédoniens’ having, according to the newspaper, ‘quelque peu boudé le festival’. The explanation for this provided by Tjibaou is that: ‘les Calédoniens sont plus habitués à ce genre de spectacle, et [...] ils pensaient ne rien trouver de nouveau à Mélanésie 2000.’

²⁶² However, note that while in the wake of the main festival certain commentators and representatives of the festival’s Organising Committee acknowledged the purportedly relatively poor attendance of the local ‘European’ population (a view that has been reaffirmed in the majority of subsequent ‘témoignages’ and commentary published in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*), Guiart maintained in 1996 that, from his personal, conscious observations of the public attending the main festival, if the ‘représentants des vieilles familles calédoniennes’ were conspicuously absent, ‘le petit peuple de Nouméa’ attended the event ‘en masse, par milliers, en famille, toute la journée’: Guiart (1996: 109). Despite Guiart’s comments in relation to the ‘vieilles familles calédoniennes’, Missotte states that Jacques Lafleur attended the opening ceremony with his family: Missotte (1995: 85).

²⁶³ In the latter connection, see ‘UN SPECIALISTE DES GRANDES MISES EN SCENE POUR « MELANESIA 2000 »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/05/1975, 8; ‘ILS ENREGISTRENT POUR MELANESIA 2000’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 28/05/1975, 18; ‘D’après la Coutume, CET HOMME EST LE SEUL A AVOIR LE DROIT DE RECITER LA GENEALOGIE « PACI » SUR LA COTE OUEST’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/05/1975, 3; ‘REGISSEUR DU THEATRE SARAH BERNHARDT A PARIS – Alain TARTAS VIENT REGLER LES PROBLEMES TECHNIQUES DE « MELANESIA 2000 »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/06/1975, 21; ‘DEUX MEMBRES D’« ANIMATION JEUNESSE » A NOUMEA’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/08/1975, 6; ‘MELANESIA 2000 – Des marionnettes pour figurer l’arrivée des Européens’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/08/1975, 4; ‘MUSIQUE MODERNE SIGNEE PIERRE BERNARD POUR MELANESIA 2000’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 30/08/1975, 5.

study included such coverage of the preparations for the *jeu scénique*. These articles in LNC all represent *Mélanésie 2000* and the *jeu scénique* in a positive light.²⁶⁴

The change in tone in this newspaper's coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* and the *jeu scénique* is first clearly apparent in an article published on the day before the main festival's public opening ceremony on the 3 September.²⁶⁵ While the paper recalls in this article that *Mélanésie 2000* 'a reçu la « bénédiction » des instances territoriales et même nationales', it goes on to state: '[q]uelques jours avant la présentation du jeu scénique, il est encore difficile de cerner, même au vu des répétitions, l'essence même de ce festival.'²⁶⁶ The newspaper concludes that:

[s]'il a fait couler beaucoup d'encre, ce 1er Festival des Arts Mélanésiens en est un peu, toutes proportions gardées, au même stade que le premier carnaval calédonien qui avait vu descendre dans la rue une foule comme on n'a pu l'occasion d'en voir à Nouméa. Avant qu'il ne commence officiellement, il est difficile de préjuger de sa réussite apparente et interne.²⁶⁷

These passages can be directly contrasted to LNC's numerous, often unqualified prior predictions of the festival's future success and the paper's positive and unproblematised prior discussion and appraisal of *Mélanésie 2000*'s nature and significance. Likening *Mélanésie 2000* to the 'carnaval calédonien', which took place in April 1975 and which received considerable coverage in the two local daily newspapers (particularly in the form of reproduced photographs), also works to occlude the festival's broader social,

²⁶⁴ For example, in one extensive article based on an interview with Dobbelaere published in mid-May, LNC represents the *jeu scénique* as constituting the major highlight of *Mélanésie 2000* and affirms that it 'restera sans doute longtemps le plus grand show de Nouvelle Calédonie et de tout le Pacifique.' 'UN SPECIALISTE DES GRANDES MISES EN SCENE POUR « MELANESIA 2000 »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/05/1975, 8.

²⁶⁵ 'MELANESIA 2000 – Cérémonie d'ouverture demain', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/09/1975, 16.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

cultural and, indeed, political objectives and message, and thus the project's potentially radical implications for the established status quo.²⁶⁸

In the subsequent editions of both LNC and LFA, published or in print during *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival (held from 3 to 7 September), considerable attention is paid by both newspapers to the festival. However, the former paper includes more coverage (both in terms of volume and in terms of detail and content) of *Mélanésie 2000* in comparison to the latter. Furthermore, LNC places considerably more emphasis on *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival as an event than its rival, particularly through the inclusion of numerous front-page headlines.²⁶⁹ According to Missotte's quantitative analysis of the daily newspapers' coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* during the period of its main festival: '[L]e volume est limité dans les normes d'un événement d'une certaine importance, mais non exceptionnel ; au même niveau que certaines courses de vélos ou de chevaux.'²⁷⁰

One prominent feature of both daily newspapers' coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival, but particularly that of LFA, is the reproduction of large numbers of

²⁶⁸ Note that 'Le Billet de l'Affreux Jojo' published in the same edition also refers to *Mélanésie 2000* and can be seen to work to depreciate its potential symbolic and actual significance, to foreground its commercial aspect (consequently obscuring its expressed objectives and message) and even to possibly mildly deter potential spectators from attending. 'Le Billet de l'Affreux Jojo', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/09/1975, 20. This is broadly characteristic of the tendency identifiable in LNC's coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival during and subsequent to the event to depreciate and/or obscure *Mélanésie 2000*'s message and its potential broader implications.

²⁶⁹ Between 3 and 8 September (inclusive) LFA includes 2 front-page headlines in relation to the festival, whereas LNC includes 6.

²⁷⁰ Missotte (1985: 492). It might also be noted in this connection that both Olivier Stirn (the French Minister for DOM-TOM) in his official address to the Territorial Assembly in January 1975 and Jean-Gabriel Eriau (the High Commissioner of France in New Caledonia) in his address to the Territorial Assembly marking the opening of the new budgetary session at the beginning of September 1975 (both speeches being reproduced in the two daily newspapers) explicitly placed participation of 'les jeunes' in *Mélanésie 2000* and in the South Pacific Games held in Guam (both financially supported by the French State) on the same footing and effectively represented them as having similar significance and importance in relation to the future of the Kanak community and the future of New Caledonian society more broadly. See 'LE DISCOURS DE M. STIRN DEVANT L'ASSEMBLEE TERRITORIALE', *La France Australe*, 25-26/01/1975, 9; 'LE DISCOURS DU MINISTRE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/01/1975, 15; 'Ouverture de la session budgétaire 1975 à l'Assemblée – LE PROGRES DANS LE CHANGEMENT EN LUTTANT CONTRE LES INEGALITES, tel est le thème du discours prononcé par M. J.-G. ERIAU', *La France Australe*, 04/09/1975, 4-5; 'LES PRINCIPAUX POINTS DU DISCOURS DU HAUSSAIRE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/09/1975, 22-23.

photographs of the event, with few captions and little written text.²⁷¹ A heavy reliance on the reproduction of photographs is typical of the overall style of these newspapers²⁷² and their coverage of local sporting and popular events. Especially given the relative paucity of explanatory captions and written text, this preponderance of photographic reproductions in the daily newspapers' coverage of the main festival constitutes a significant discursive strategy with specific implications for the representation of the nature and significance of *Mélanésie 2000*.²⁷³ For, as highlighted by Missotte, this unexplained mass of photographs effectively obscures the objectives and message of the festival and diminishes its broader significance and implications.²⁷⁴

LFA's coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* in the edition published on the 8 September –the day after the main festival's official closing ceremony – is a representative example of this newspaper's coverage of the event. The front page of this edition includes the headline '*50.000 SPECTATEURS à Mélanésie 2000*', which is accompanied by a photograph of a large crowd, gathered around a group of Kanak dancers. As clearly indicated by this front-page headline and photograph, the spectators, particularly their large numbers, constitute the primary focus of LFA's coverage of the main festival in this edition. The majority of the four pages devoted to the event are filled with

²⁷¹ Fifty-three photographs were reproduced between 1 and 9 September (inclusive) in LFA, 92 in LNC. According to Missotte's analysis of the proportion of space devoted to photographs, headlines and text, LFA's coverage comprised 76% photographs, 15% headlines and 9% text, and LNC's coverage comprised 80% photographs, 8% headlines and 12% text: Missotte (1985: 492). However, in considering all of these figures, it is important to recall that the latter publication included considerably more coverage of the main festival than the former. The content contained and expressed in the small proportion of text published by LFA was consequently considerably more limited than in the case of LNC.

²⁷² This is particularly true of LNC, which approaches a tabloid publication in style.

²⁷³ Note that both Missotte and Mokaddem have attributed particular strategic discursive significance to the (relative and in many instances complete) absence of captions accompanying the photographs reproduced: see Missotte (1985: 493); Mokaddem (2005a: 138-139).

²⁷⁴ LC itself highlighted and criticised this aspect of the daily newspapers' coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* in the wake of the main festival's conclusion, stating in an article published on the 18 September: '[e]t la presse ! des photos, ça bouche toujours un coin et ça fait vendre. Mais le fond du festival n'a jamais été abordé.' 'MELANESIA 2000: LE GRAND RASSEMBLEMENT DE L'HISTOIRE KANAK', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 32, 11-17/09/1975, 6.

photographs, reproduced without captions.²⁷⁵ No reference is made in this edition to the objectives, message or significance of the festival, nor is there any real discussion of its substantive ‘content’. The focus, rather, rests squarely on the movements of the crowd and the so-called ‘*chasseurs d’image*’.²⁷⁶ The spectators and photographers are alone represented by LFA in this article’s text as purposeful agents and attributed with a particular emotional state of being. Kanak presence, agency and subjectivity are rendered completely absent in this text.

At first glance, this apparent absence (and discursive occlusion and exclusion) might appear to be countered by the 19 photographs accompanying this text, many of which depict Kanak participants actively engaged in various activities in the course of the festival. However, through the reproduction of these photographic images, the reader’s viewpoint is effectively assimilated to that of the ‘*chasseurs d’image*’ mentioned in the text (although, in this case, the viewpoint is actually that of the photojournalist) who observe the Kanak participants from a distance and through the objectifying lens of the camera. Kanak subjects and their actions are consequently reified in these reproduced images and Kanak agency remains discursively occluded in the coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* published in this edition of LFA.

A similar discursive occlusion of Kanak agency and presence is apparent in a short article published by LNC on the 5 September, particularly through the use of a series of passive constructions in the article’s text and the absence of captions for the accompanying photographs.²⁷⁷ An article published by LNC on the 9 September can also be seen to discursively represent *Mélanésie 2000*’s Kanak participants as passive

²⁷⁵ ‘MELANESIA 2000 – CE FUT UN SUCCES CONSIDERABLE’, *La France Australe*, 08/09/1975, 11-14.

²⁷⁶ For example, LFA reports: ‘[a]u gré des danses et des chants, d’un « point-soleil » à l’autre, des groupes de plusieurs centaines de personnes se formaient ici et là, se défaisaient pour se reformer ailleurs [sic] Et sans trêve les chasseurs d’image – qui avec son Instamatic, qui avec sa Super 8 dernier modèle – s’en donnaient à cœur joie’: *ibid.*, 11.

²⁷⁷ ‘MELANESIA 2000 – AGRICULTURE ET ARTISANAT POUR LA 2ème JOURNEE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/09/1975, 3. However, Kanak agency and presence are not occluded in other articles published in the same edition of the paper: see ‘MELANESIA 2000 – LES JEUX COUTUMIERS’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 06/09/1975, 18-19.

objects rather than active subjects or agents through the combined effect of its written text and photographic images reproduced en masse.²⁷⁸ This latter article is constituted by a five-page spread comprised primarily of photographs depicting different aspects of the festival, some of which are accompanied by brief sections of text, short captions and/or fall under various sub-headings.²⁷⁹ However, none of the brief passages of text scattered throughout this article refer directly to *Mélanésie 2000*'s Kanak participants or organisers. Furthermore, of the 16 captions (which accompany under half of the 38 images reproduced and which are almost entirely focused on *Mélanésie 2000*'s Kanak participants), only two refer directly to the human 'subjects' of the images in question.²⁸⁰ All of the remaining 14 captions avoid any such reference, predominantly through the nominalisation²⁸¹ of certain verbs and adjectives.²⁸² Moreover, similar to LFA's coverage of the festival published on the 8 September, the images reproduced by LNC in this article serve to reinforce the textual occlusion of Kanak agency and to reify *Mélanésie 2000*'s Kanak participants, who become objects for the consumption of the (non-Kanak) spectator-photographer and the newspaper's reader.²⁸³

On the other hand, it should be highlighted that in previous and subsequent editions of both daily newspapers Kanak agency and presence are not discursively occluded in the

²⁷⁸ 'MELANESIA 2000 – LES IMAGES D'UN FESTIVAL REUSSI', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 09/09/1975, 11-15.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ These captions run: 'LES DANSEURS DE TIGA' and 'LA DELEGATION DE LIFOU'.

²⁸¹ 'Nominalisation' is defined by Kroeger as the 'derivational process that derives nouns from roots or stems of some other category': Kroeger (2005: 347). The discursive effects of such nominalisation (which permits both the deletion of agency and modality from a clause, thereby potentially 'mystifying' its participants and their responsibility, as well as the attitudes of the author, and potentially reifying processes and qualities) are discussed in Fowler (1991: 79-80).

²⁸² For example: 'Le tressage des nasses à poissons'; 'LA CUISSON DES BOUGNAS'; 'LE DISCOURS DE LA CEREMONIE DE CLOTURE'.

²⁸³ It might also be noted that the spectator-photographer represents the primary focus of the introductory passage of text heading this article. Indeed, as in the case of LFA's coverage published on the 8 September, this introductory passage focuses primarily on the overall number of spectators at *Mélanésie 2000*. However, the estimate given of the total number of people to have attended the festival is considerably lower than that given by LFA, reflecting a consistent broader tendency. Particularly given the correlation frequently drawn by both daily newspapers between large spectator numbers and the 'success' of *Mélanésie 2000*, this tendency could be viewed as an attempt by LNC to discursively diminish, undercut or detract from the main festival's overwhelming 'success' in those terms.

same manner. For example, on the 9 September LFA includes an article with a lengthy text in which Tjibaou and several other Kanak organisers of the event are interviewed and quoted directly.²⁸⁴ LNC includes an article on the 10 September in which Scholastique Pidjot is interviewed and quoted directly.²⁸⁵ However, the attribution of agency (and responsibility) in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*'s organisation in the coverage of LNC is not straight forward, and is discussed further below.

The general foregrounding of large spectator numbers and the representation (both implicit and explicit) of those large numbers as the principal reason for *Mélanésie 2000*'s 'success' apparent in the coverage of the main festival published by both daily newspapers can itself be identified as significant in two main respects. Firstly, it can be seen to diminish if not occlude the 'internal' potential and/or actual significance, objectives and implications of the festival for the Kanak people involved and for the country's Kanak population as a whole (as well as the resulting significance and implications for New Caledonian society more broadly). Secondly, it can be seen to reinstitute and reinforce the non-Kanak (particularly the 'European') population and perspective as the ultimate criterion and arbiter of importance, value and meaning, *Mélanésie 2000* and its main festival being represented primarily as a popular event or spectacle for the diversion and gratification of its non-Kanak spectators and amateur photographers.

LFA contains few references to *Mélanésie 2000*'s objectives, message, significance and implications in its coverage of the September main festival. Moreover, it refers to the *jeu scénique* only very summarily and in passing.²⁸⁶ Despite the preponderance of photographs in this publication's coverage, none can be readily identified as showing the *jeu scénique*. This almost complete discursive occlusion of the *jeu scénique* in

²⁸⁴ 'M. JEAN-MARIE TJIBAOU, PRESIDENT DU COMITE ORGANISATEUR « MELANESIA 2000 A DEPASSÉ TOUTES NOS ESPÉRANCES »', *La France Australe*, 09/09/1975, 4-5.

²⁸⁵ « POUR UN SOURIAINT VILLAGE MELANESIEN » est enchantée de Mélanésie 2000 – CETTE ASSOCIATION EN AVAIT EU L'IDEE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 10/09/1975, 4.

²⁸⁶ See, for example, 'MELANESIA 2000 – CE FUT UN SUCCES CONSIDERABLE', *La France Australe*, 08/09/1975, 11.

LFA's coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* is highly significant, especially given the importance of the *jeu scénique* as a means of 'communicating' *Mélanésie 2000*'s message. Any intimations of Kanak calls for a radical reconfiguration (and decolonisation) of the established socio-political order are thereby also occluded in the coverage of the festival published by LFA. Moreover, no references are made by this newspaper in its coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* to colonisation and its past and continuing impacts on and implications for the Kanak people and New Caledonia as a whole. The historical contextualisation of the festival project is consequently occluded, along with its socio-political objectives, message and implications.

It is worth noting that the participation of people from the audience, including people from New Caledonia's various ethnic groups, in the final dance or '*boria*' at the end of the *jeu scénique* is noted indirectly by LFA in an article published subsequent to the conclusion of the main festival.²⁸⁷ Only one other article in the local print-media coverage of the festival mentions this final dance.²⁸⁸ In its article, LFA includes an extended quotation from Tjibaou in which he affirms the 'authenticity' of *Mélanésie 2000* as a shared experience for its spectators of all ethnic groups and its Kanak participants, as well as its positive impact on the interaction between people from the different ethnic groups.²⁸⁹ At the end of this quotation, Tjibaou maintains that:

*les spectateurs se sont pris au jeu puisque lors de la dernière représentation scénique, des Européens, des Antillais, des Tahitiens, hommes, femmes et enfants se sont mêlés aux danseurs dans le final de la Boria.*²⁹⁰

²⁸⁷ 'M. JEAN-MARIE TJIBAOU, PRESIDENT DU COMITE ORGANISATEUR « MELANESIA 2000 A DEPASSÉ TOUTES NOS ESPÉRANCES »', *La France Australe*, 09/09/1975, 4-5.

²⁸⁸ An article published by LC (discussed further below) identifies this dance, uniting '*blancs et kanaks*', as expressing the Kanak message of the *jeu scénique* and of *Mélanésie 2000* as a whole – '*« pour être heureux, comprenez nous, SOYEZ kanaks, dansez avec nous »*' – a message that is explicitly linked by *Les Caléoniens* to the (posited) political engagement and program of the Kanak people for independence. 'MELANESIA 2000: LE GRAND RASSEMBLEMENT DE L'HISTOIRE KANAK', *Les Caléoniens*, no. 32, 11-17/09/1975, 6.

²⁸⁹ 'M. JEAN-MARIE TJIBAOU, PRESIDENT DU COMITE ORGANISATEUR « MELANESIA 2000 A DEPASSÉ TOUTES NOS ESPÉRANCES »', *La France Australe*, 09/09/1975, 4-5.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

By reason of the complete discursive occlusion of the *jeu scénique*'s message in LFA's coverage, the potential significance of this spontaneous audience participation as possibly signaling the understanding and acceptance by the audience (representing the country's different ethno-cultural communities) of that message is itself similarly occluded.

Moreover, as a consequence of the discursive occlusion of the *jeu scénique* and the festival's socio-political message and implications, *Mélanésie 2000* is ultimately represented by LFA as an event entirely conformable to and confirmatory of the maintenance of the contemporary status quo. The discursive illusion of social 'consensus' in New Caledonia (itself working to reinforce and place beyond challenge the contemporary status quo) is consequently maintained. This newspaper's approach to the *jeu scénique* can be seen to conform to its overall editorial approach, which, as noted by both Picquet and Godard, was to actively avoid political subjects and contentious social issues.²⁹¹

LNC adopts a different discursive strategy in relation to the *jeu scénique* to the strategy of silence adopted by LFA, although the effect of the two approaches is broadly similar. The *jeu scénique* is only discussed in detail in one article published by LNC, which appears in the first edition published subsequent to the closure of the main festival, dated the 8 September.²⁹² In contrast to the majority of articles published in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival by the two daily newspapers, the text of this article is particularly foregrounded, being entirely printed in bold. It is accompanied by four large photographs depicting different moments of the *jeu scénique*.

In keeping with this article's headline, '*EXTRAORDINAIRE REUSSITE*', the first paragraph of the text articulates a highly positive evaluation of the festival (especially in

²⁹¹ Picquet (2002: 37-38) ; Godard (1992: 246).

²⁹² '*EXTRAORDINAIRE REUSSITE*', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/09/1975, 4.

reference to the large numbers of spectators)²⁹³ and a broad construction of its ‘success’ and continuing impact. Indeed, the first two sentences run: ‘*MELANESIA 2000 est fini. Vivre Mélanésie 2000 !*’²⁹⁴ Nevertheless, LNC represents the festival in this article predominantly as a Kanak event, stating, for example:

*[p]our leur grande fête canaque qui, jamais de mémoire d’homme de cette terre n’avait réuni autant de tribus, autant de représentants d’un bout à l’autre de la Calédonie et des îles, les Mélanésiens ont fait quelque chose de bien qui mérite un grand coup de chapeau.*²⁹⁵

Mélanésie 2000 is also represented as having been undertaken ‘*[p]our retrouver une identité issue du passé – et que certains pensaient perdue*’, similarly indicating the primarily Kanak focus attributed to the festival by LNC.²⁹⁶ The broader focus and objectives of the festival concerning non-Kanak people are represented in very narrow terms, the ‘*esprit*’ of this Kanak ‘*initiative*’ being characterised by the newspaper as

²⁹³ The newspaper states: ‘*[a]vec plus de dix mille entrées parfois (au jeu scénique notamment), et une moyenne de fréquentation de trois mille personnes, ce festival a été une incontestable réussite populaire, et une réussite tout court*’: *ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.* Note the paternalistic tone of this statement. Note also that this use of the term ‘*canaque*’ by LNC is relatively exceptional. The paper predominantly uses the term ‘*mélanésien*’ (and its variants), even when this means changing an original text that is otherwise reproduced word for word. In its coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*, the term ‘*canaque*’ (and its variants) only appears in 10 articles. In 4 of these articles it appears in direct quotations from political communiqués or speeches, and in 3 others it appears when reference is made to the title of the *jeu scénique*, *Kanaké* (referred to as ‘*« Kanake »*’, ‘*« KANAKE »*’ and ‘*Kanake*’). A discursive distance is consequently generally maintained by the paper in relation to the use of ‘*canaque*’ (and its variants) when it does appear. Similarly, the context within which ‘*canaque*’ is used in the passage cited here could be seen to suggest its implicit construction by LNC as a term used by ‘*Mélanésiens*’ to refer to themselves, rather than a term which is necessarily accepted and used directly by the newspaper. This consistent avoidance of ‘*canaque*’ is not similarly apparent in LFA’s coverage of the festival.

²⁹⁶ This reference to a Kanak ‘*identité*’ is significant, both by reason of the fact that Kanak identity is effectively posited and so affirmed and recognised as existing by the newspaper in this passage, and by reason of the fact that it is effectively posited as being unique and singular (‘*une identité*’), implying an inherent socio-cultural Kanak unity. However, within the broader discursive context of this article and this newspaper’s coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* as a whole, Kanak ‘*identité*’ recognised and affirmed in these terms still appears to be entirely divorced from and irrelevant to the realm of politics. Moreover, as discussed below, LNC tends in its coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* published subsequent to the conclusion of the main festival to focus on certain subjects that can be seen to highlight persisting disunity, rather than unity, within the country’s Kanak population.

having been: '*de faire revivre la tradition et de la faire connaître et comprendre aux Blancs*'.²⁹⁷

Despite LNC's affirmation towards the beginning of this article that '*[L]es critiques à fournir sont rares et en regard de la somme de travail que représente une telle organisation, elles sont inexistantes*', such criticisms constitute the major preoccupation of this article.²⁹⁸ In particular, the newspaper describes '*certaines scènes et le ton du jeu scénique*' as '*la seule ombre au tableau*'.²⁹⁹ According to LNC:

*[p]our la plupart des quelques vingt mille spectateurs qui y ont assisté, ce jeu scénique ne fut qu'une grande et belle fresque, un spectacle qui s'est déroulé dans un cadre incomparable. Pour d'autres – et pas seulement pour des Européens – ce fut un procès du « Blanc ». Un bien assez mauvais procès en vérité qui, par une grotesque caricature, se voulut réécrire l'histoire à sa façon.*³⁰⁰

LNC clearly positions itself as sharing the view of the second group of spectators described in this passage, particularly given that the third sentence elaborating on that group's view is constructed as a direct truth claim about the 'real' character of the *jeu scénique*.

The specification by the newspaper that this second group were not just '*Européens*' can be seen to serve three functions. In the first instance, it works to give credibility to the viewpoint attributed to this group, by highlighting that it is a viewpoint not held solely by those who appear to be directly concerned by or implicated in the so-called '*procès du « Blanc »*'. Secondly, it foreshadows the contention advanced by LNC subsequently in this article that the Kanak organisers of *Mélanésie 2000* were not aware of (and so not responsible for) this contentious element of the *jeu scénique*. Lastly, it

²⁹⁷ 'EXTRAORDINAIRE REUSSITE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/09/1975, 4. LNC also affirms that *Mélanésie 2000* had been '*annoncé comme devant être une présentation, une explication de la coutume aux « Blancs »*.'

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

works to construct a ‘consensual’ model of New Caledonian society beyond the ‘European’ (‘white’) community alone and represents all members of that society as sharing the same perspective on and construction of New Caledonia’s (colonial) history. This is further reinforced by the employment of the verb ‘*se vouloir*’ in the phrase ‘*qui [...] se voulut réécrire l’histoire à sa façon*’,³⁰¹ which implies that this (posited) attempt to ‘rewrite’ history was ultimately unsuccessful.

The characterisation by LNC of the *jeu scénique* as a ‘*mauvais procès du « Blanc »*’ relates specifically to the second *tableau* of the production, depicting the arrival of Europeans and colonisation’s negative impacts on and implications for the Kanak people. The word ‘*caricature*’ is, moreover, also used in this article to describe the representation in the *jeu scénique* of the military Captain, the missionary and the merchant.³⁰² However, no further specific details are given by LNC in relation to the nature and content of this second *tableau*, nor is any explanation given as to precisely why or how it (purportedly) constitutes ‘*une grotesque caricature*’ and a ‘*mauvais procès du « Blanc »*’. Any open or constructive dialogue in relation to divergent constructions of New Caledonia’s colonial history (let alone any acknowledgement of its negative past and present impacts on and implications for the Kanak people and the country as a whole in the present and the future) is consequently discursively foreclosed by LNC.

The negative view of this part of the *jeu scénique* expressed by LNC is also posited by the paper to have been shared by ‘*nombre d’organismes mélanésien qui, en vérité, ne s’étaient pas du tout attendus à cela*’.³⁰³ The paper goes on to affirm that:

[L]’explication vient que pour « faire mieux », ils [les organisateurs mélanésien] avaient fait appel à des spécialistes de la mise en scène et que ceux-ci ont fait Mélanésie 2000 à leur façon.³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid. See the discussion of this aspect of the *jeu scénique* in Annex 3.

³⁰³ ‘EXTRAORDINAIRE REUSSITE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/09/1975, 4.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

Consequently, the *jeu scénique*'s purported attempt to 'rewrite' history '*à sa façon*' is identified as having actually been '*à la façon*' of these '*spécialistes de la mise en scène*'. Later in this article, LNC declares:

*[n]ous ne pensons pas que pour Mélanésie 2000, la location des services de M. Dobbelaere et consorts ait été une bonne affaire. A notre avis, elle était même inutile et les Mélanésien qui, en ce festival ont su faire preuve d'imagination, auraient certainement mieux réussi leur jeu scénique sans l'influence d'étrangers à leur mode de penser les choses.*³⁰⁵

This reference to '*Dobbelaere et consorts*' has a clearly pejorative tone and the distinction between *Mélanésie 2000*'s Kanak organisers and these '*spécialistes*' is further reinforced in this passage.³⁰⁶

This emphasis on and negative evaluation of the involvement of these '*spécialistes*' can be identified as a discursive strategy working to effectively occlude Kanak agency in relation to festival project's radical political message. Such discursive strategies have often been identified in colonial discourses (both in New Caledonia, particularly in the 'mainstream' mass-media, and elsewhere) in which indigenous movements and actions of a militant, anti-colonial character are constructed as being created, influenced, directed or controlled by 'outside' groups or forces (such as, for example, International Socialism), so as to discursively occlude the possibility of any independent indigenous agency and to discredit and delegitimise indigenous anti-colonialist movements and

³⁰⁵ Ibid. The view expressed here can be directly contrasted to that expressed by LNC just prior to the commencement of the main festival, according to which: '*[a]vant même que le Festival ne commence, on ne peut que féliciter les organisateurs d'avoir eu l'idée de solliciter la collaboration de professionnels habitués à ce genre de manifestation*': 'DEUX MEMBRES D'« ANIMATION JEUNESSE » A NOUMEA', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/08/1975, 6.

³⁰⁶ At another point, the newspaper effectively characterises Dobbelaere as a 'caricature' '*de l'intellectuel qui sait tout et qui vient dire aux Kanakes ce qu'ils doivent penser, dire et faire.*' The use of the term '*Kanakes*' in this instance might be seen to imply the pro-independence political inscription of and motivations behind Dobbelaere's posited 'illicit interference' with the festival project. 'EXTRAORDINAIRE REUSSITE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/09/1975, 4.

claims (all of which represent a symbolic and/or actual threat to the continued stability and dominance of the established colonial order).³⁰⁷

It might also be noted in this connection that LNC was the only newspaper of the four considered in this study not to have published an extended interview with Tjibaou³⁰⁸ (or, in the case of LFA, an article including extended quotations from him alongside quotations from a number of the festival's other Kanak organisers).³⁰⁹ LNC's contention that the representation of colonisation in the *jeu scénique* was exclusively the work of the Metropolitan 'specialists' and was not intended or approved by the festival's Kanak organisers was not put to those Kanak organisers directly by the newspaper, and so could not be contradicted by them – it was simply affirmed and posited as the 'truth' by LNC. In contrast, this issue was raised in LJC's interview with Tjibaou, whose statement in response clearly contradicts the position maintained by LNC (and by LJC up to that point) that the festival's Kanak organisers had been 'duped' or manipulated

³⁰⁷ To take another local example from the contemporaneous period, subsequent to protests in 1974 against the annual military parade (held on the 24 September in Noumea to celebrate the 121th anniversary of the '*prise de possession*' of New Caledonia by France) and the imprisonment of certain protesters, a number of individuals from the *Groupe 1878*, the *Foulards Rouges* and the UJC were arrested and given a range of prison sentences. According to *Mwà Vée*, the '*plus forte peine (6 mois de prison ferme) est attribuée à deux militants de l'UJC, Jean-Paul CAILLARD et Jean-Pierre DEVILLERS. Les autorités coloniales prétendent démontrer ainsi que les kanak sont des irresponsables manipulés par des militants blancs responsables. Par ailleurs, l'UJC à travers son journal "Le Koloïnisé" s'attribue également les événements du 24-25 septembre.*' 'Chronologie des années 1974 – 1975 – 1976' (1995: 58). A more recent example in the discourse elaborated by LNC is identified by Chanter, who maintains that during the '*les événements*': '[t]he FLNKS [...] is presented as a collection of terrorists and extremists, who have been indoctrinated by alien doctrines and led by outsiders to destabilise the political order': Chanter (2002: 111). Chanter further states in relation to LNC's discourse in 1988 that its 'depiction of Melanesians as passive followers, easily led astray by ideologically driven foreign agitators, was of course, deeply racist. This Melanesian had neither the dignity of the "noble savage" nor the "wild man" (White 1978). He, or she, was the child of colonialism – dependent, incapable and lost': *ibid.*, 148. Reference is to Hayden White, 1978, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in cultural criticism*, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press. See also Missotte in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*: Missotte (1995b: 60, footnote 13). On the other hand, note Guiart's commentary in this connection: Guiart (1996: 104). See also Tjibaou's comments made in May 1985 in relation to this same discourse and 'ideology' as articulated by Bernard Pons, which Tjibaou distills as expressing the view that '*nous [Kanak] somme inexistants*': Tjibaou (1996: 219-220).

³⁰⁸ 'L'Avocat du diable à cœur ouvert avec : Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Le Journal Calédonien*, 17-23/09/1975, 4-5; 'Jean Marie TJIBAOU EXPLIQUE – L'ÊTRE et L'AVOIR différencient les deux cultures en présence : Kanak et Occidentale', *Les Calédoniens*, 25/09-01/10/1975, 2-3.

³⁰⁹ 'M. JEAN-MARIE TJIBAOU, PRESIDENT DU COMITE ORGANISATEUR « MELANESIA 2000 A DEPASSÉ TOUTES NOS ESPÉRANCES »', *La France Australe*, 09/09/1975, 4-5.

by ‘*Dobbelaere et consorts*’ and were ignorant of (and not responsible for) the ‘dissentient’ aspects of the *jeu scénique*.³¹⁰

LNC’s article on the *jeu scénique* does include some acknowledgement (and, indeed, positive appraisal of) Kanak agency in relation to the festival’s organisation and realisation.³¹¹ However, this agency is restricted to the elements of the festival and the *jeu scénique* identified as conformable to and confirmatory of the social ‘consensus’ posited as existing within contemporary New Caledonian society as a whole (and favourable to the maintenance of the status quo).³¹² Within the discourse elaborated by LNC in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*’s *jeu scénique*, the posited social ‘consensus’ and established status quo consequently remain unchallenged, and are even potentially strengthened by way of their direct opposition to an ‘external’ threat – that is, through the construction of a collective, New Caledonian (Kanak and non-Kanak) ‘us’, against an external, aggressive and threatening ‘them’.

At the conclusion of this article, the ‘*grand message*’ of *Mélanésie 2000* is associated with the possibility that *Mélanésie 2000*, including its *jeu scénique* and regardless of the posited foreign ‘interference’, may allow for

*une meilleure compréhension entre les Mélanésiens et les autres ethnies
de ce Territoire, table rase étant faite d’un passé où les hommes
raisonnaient différemment.*³¹³

This last phrase effectively expresses the necessary condition for the acceptance by LNC of *Mélanésie 2000* and its *jeu scénique*. It can also be seen to further explain the

³¹⁰ Tjibaou affirms in this interview: ‘[c]’est moi qui ai proposé le thème en trois tableaux, et c’est lui [Dobbelaere] qui les a mis en forme.’ ‘L’avocat du diable a cœur ouvert avec : Jean-Marie Tjibaou’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 5.

³¹¹ ‘EXTRAORDINAIRE REUSSITE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/09/1975, 4.

³¹² Thus, the newspaper affirms that ‘*Mélanésie 2000 a eu le succès qu’il méritait parce qu’il était l’œuvre des Mélanésiens ; le jeu scénique a pêché [sic] parce qu’il n’était justement pas l’œuvre des seuls Mélanésiens*’: *ibid.* A link could potentially be drawn between this use of the verb ‘*pêcher*’ (although note the typing error in the original print) in relation to the *jeu scénique* and the negative depiction in that *jeu scénique* itself of the missionary and the process and consequences of religious conversion as an integral part of the country’s colonisation.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

critical attitude of this newspaper towards the second *tableau* of the *jeu scénique*, which breached the condition in failing to '*faire table rase*' of the colonial 'past', as well as explaining the newspaper's need to place responsibility and 'blame' for that breach on 'outside' agitators so as to maintain the illusion of 'consensus' within New Caledonian society in relation to the legitimacy and continuation of the established status quo.

The political implications of the *jeu scénique* (both from a 'Kanak' and from a 'Western' perspective) arise from its elaboration of a specific historical narrative and the nature of the continuities and discontinuities constructed therein between the past, the present and the future. These continuities and discontinuities effectively give rise in the *jeu scénique* to the (implicit) affirmation and *revendication* of the particular political legitimacy, position and rights of Kanak people collectively as the country's indigenous people – that is, the affirmation and *revendication* of Kanak sovereignty. The inter-group reconciliation projected in the *jeu scénique*'s last *tableau* is thus realised through the restitution of the Kanak people's '*droit d'accueil*' as the country's (metaphorical) '*maîtres de la terre*' – the restitution of its sovereignty – and the decolonisation of New Caledonia politically, but also socially and culturally, in terms of the nature of the relationships between the Kanak people and the country's non-Kanak inhabitants.

In other words, the *jeu scénique* can be seen precisely to draw connections between the past, on the one hand, and the present and the future, on the other, in two key (and interrelated) respects. In the first instance, it posits the continuing political legitimacy, position and rights of the Kanak people as the country's first occupants (conformable to both a 'Kanak' and a 'Western' perspective). In the second instance, it posits the continuation of colonisation and its negative impacts on and implications for the country's first occupants in the present – including the wrongful alienation of Kanak sovereignty. In this manner, the *jeu scénique* effectively deligitimises the maintenance of the contemporary status quo and justifies its radical transformation.

However, LNC does not accept the historical narrative elaborated in the *jeu scénique*, including its transformational socio-political vision and project for the future. This

newspaper denies the validity and ‘truth’ of the *jeu scénique*’s representation of the country’s colonial history by characterising it as a ‘rewriting’ of that history.³¹⁴ Furthermore, the continuities constructed and posited by the *jeu scénique* between the past, on the one hand, and the present and the future, on the other, are severed in the discourse articulated by this newspaper, which maintains rather that ‘une meilleure compréhension entre les Mélanésien et les autres ethnies de ce Territoire’ can only be achieved in the present and into the future if ‘table rase [est] faite d’un passé où les hommes raisonnaient différemment’.³¹⁵ In this manner, the paper constructs and posits a strict division between the past, on the one hand, and the present and the future, on the other.³¹⁶ The political message articulated in the *jeu scénique*’s last *tableau* is consequently fundamentally altered through its severance from the previous *tableau*. Similarly, the political signification attributable to the ‘customary’ *accueil* enacted in the last *tableau* understood from a Kanak perspective is occluded (either not having been perceived or being strategically passed over in silence). The ‘cérémonie de paix’ and ‘fraternal’ future projected in the last *tableau* are consequently transformed into a confirmation of the maintenance of the established status quo.³¹⁷

Comments made in a speech delivered on the 24 September 1975 (the 122nd anniversary of France’s ‘*prise de possession*’ of New Caledonia) by the High Commissioner, Jean-Gabriel Eriau, in relation to the *jeu scénique* are also worth noting in this connection. Unlike LNC, Eriau acknowledged that the representation of colonisation in the *jeu*

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Note also that in terms of the significance and nature of *Mélanésie 2000*’s mini-festivals for Kanak communities and their culture, on a number of occasions in the coverage published by the two daily newspapers, particular emphasis is placed on the posited purpose of these events in helping Kanak people and communities ‘reconnect’ to ‘the past’ and ‘resuscitate’ their ‘traditions’ and ‘ancient’ cultural practices and ‘customs’. However, this is never linked in the coverage of these newspapers to the past and present impacts and legacies of colonisation. Rather the ‘*fait colonial*’ is entirely occluded by the daily newspapers in their coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*’s mini-festivals and the nature, purpose and significance of those events. See for example ‘MELANESIA 2000 – MINI-FESTIVAL A YATE AVEC LE SUD DE LA GRANDE TERRE, L’ILE DES PINS ET LES LOYAUTE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 18/06/1975, 8.

³¹⁷ This analysis can be seen to intersect with the view expressed by Fote Trolue in relation to the politics of Kanak culture and *accueil* in the New Caledonian context: see Trolue and Caihe (1995: 162).

scénique's second *tableau* was '*juste dans le fond, malgré son côté caricatural*'.³¹⁸ However, he nevertheless affirmed that, '*aujourd'hui, les hommes sont différents*',³¹⁹ effectively mobilising the same discursive strategy as LNC to legitimate and affirm the maintenance of the contemporary status quo. In its coverage of the 24 September 1975 anniversary, LNC states approvingly that this was an occasion for the High Commissioner,

*en quelques propos empreints de réalisme, d'évoquer l'évolution de la Calédonie depuis le rattachement de 1853, ainsi que l'évolution des relations entre les ethnies. Ce faisant, le Haussaire s'est attaché à souligner les progrès qui accompagnent la mise en œuvre des objectifs contenus dans la devise Liberté-Egalité-Fraternité. C'est avec l'autorité de l'évidence qu'il a pu, par cela même, noter la vanité des velléités de discordes de « quelques troublions ».*³²⁰

The discourse attributed to the High Commissioner clearly situates the posited past, present and future 'progress' (that is, the posited positive evolution or development) of relations between different ethnic groups in New Caledonia as taking place within the framework of the French Republic and according to French Republican values.³²¹ The status quo positively affirmed and projected into the future in this passage is a French New Caledonia. Opposition to and the possibility of changing that status quo are, moreover, downplayed, dismissed and delegitimised.

While LNC's coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* and the *jeu scénique* can be seen to work to occlude the political message and signification of the festival in the service of the newspaper's own political message and interests, the paper again reaffirms its construction of the festival project as essentially a-political and politically insignificant in *Le Billet de l'Affreux Jojo* published in the same edition as the article treating the *jeu*

³¹⁸ Jean-Gabriel Eriau, quoted in Kurtovitch (1995: 140).

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ 'A L'OCCASION D'UNE DECORATION', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/09/1975, 2.

³²¹ Note that, as stated by West et al., France's 'official motto [...] may be regarded as a concise summary of the republican program.' West, Desdevises, Fenet, Gaurier, Heussaff and Lévy (1998: 137).

scénique analysed above.³²² In the first instance, *Jojo* uses elements of the second *tableau* of the *jeu scénique* as the basis of a ‘humorous’ play on words. This treatment of the *jeu scénique* as part of a joke could itself be viewed as an attempt to discursively neutralise, discredit and disparage both it and its possible radical and disruptive implications from the local ‘European’ perspective adopted by *Jojo*.³²³

Jojo then goes on to exclaim:

[c]e qui ne veut pas dire que cette grande fresque historique était à l’eau de rose, bien au contraire ! N’empêche que ce qui est à noter, c’est que le folklore rassemble beaucoup plus de monde que la politique.³²⁴

This last statement recalls LNC’s earlier critique of the purported attempted ‘politicisation’ of *Mélanésie 2000* by the UC in May. It also reiterates and reinforces the critique articulated by *Jojo* at that time of politics and politicians in general.³²⁵ The expression of disdain for and distrust of politics and politicians in general is a common theme in *Le Billet de l’Affreux Jojo*. However, the reprise of this theme in *Jojo*’s discussion of *Mélanésie 2000* immediately subsequent to the main festival and the two performances of the *jeu scénique* serves a particular discursive function in this context. Steering his readers away from the potentially unsettling and contentious topic of the *jeu scénique* and back onto familiar ground, *Jojo* is able to minimise the significance of

³²² ‘LE BILLET DE L’AFFREUX JOJO’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 08/09/1975, 20. Note that in many respects, this daily column, *Le Billet de l’Affreux Jojo*, can be seen to have crystallised the predominant underlying social, cultural, economic and political perspective advocated by LNC throughout this period. No regular editorial column appeared in the newspaper at this time and, while many articles within the newspaper can be seen to have constituted a mixture of ‘fact’ and ‘opinion’, *Le Billet de l’Affreux Jojo* stood unmitigated as the newspaper’s only regular ‘editorial-like’ commentary: Madoeuf (1986: 87). Thus, as stated by Franck Madoeuf in 1986, “*Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*”, c’est le journal de “l’Affreux Jojo””: *ibid.*, 85.

³²³ ‘LE BILLET DE L’AFFREUX JOJO’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 08/09/1975, 20. Note that in the following edition *Jojo* recalls this joke, thereby further reinforcing its mocking dismissal of the *jeu scénique*: ‘LE BILLET DE L’AFFREUX JOJO’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 09/09/1975, 1, 24.

³²⁴ ‘LE BILLET DE L’AFFREUX JOJO’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 08/09/1975, 1, 20. *Jojo* goes on to affirm in this *billet* that: “[j]amais de mémoire de Caldoche je n’ai vu un leader de parti, ou même plusieurs, pouvoir regrouper autant de sympathisants dans un meeting. Ce qui prouve, et c’est rassurant, que le Caillou n’est pas encore tellement atteint par ce virus de la politique, et que tous les espoirs nous sont permis, pas vrai ?”

³²⁵ See ‘Le Billet de l’Affreux Jojo’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 21/05/1975, 23.

the *jeu scénique*, not only by representing it in a farcical manner, but also by affirming that the most important point to be taken away from *Mélanésie 2000* is its demonstration of the (posited) ‘fact’ that politics and politicians are not as omniscient a force in New Caledonia as they might pretend or like to be, as purportedly demonstrated by the festival itself. Beyond this, *Jojo* effectively dismisses the *jeu scénique* and *Mélanésie 2000* as a whole as ultimately relatively insignificant. *Jojo*’s treatment of *Mélanésie 2000* (including its *jeu scénique*) in this *billet* confirms its discursive construction by LNC as inherently a-political, as ‘folklore’ or ‘culture’, and as insignificant to ‘politics’.

A trend can be identified in the coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* published by LNC in this and subsequent editions. Following the conclusion of the main festival, LNC tends to particularly emphasise certain negative aspects of or subjects relating to the festival and to subtly diminish, downplay, depreciate or qualify the festival’s (previously loudly and repeatedly proclaimed) ‘success’.³²⁶ This was not a similarly prominent feature in LNC’s coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* published prior to the September main festival,³²⁷ and it is not mirrored in LFA’s coverage.

This tendency is particularly apparent in the newspaper’s new emphasis on the division within the Kanak community in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*.³²⁸ However, this division is itself constructed by LNC in such a manner as to ultimately discursively construct, affirm and reinforce the socio-political ‘consensus’, supportive of the contemporary status quo, posited as characterising contemporary New Caledonian society. This

³²⁶ See, for example, ‘MELANESIA 2000 – LES IMAGES D’UN FESTIVAL REUSSI’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/09/1975, 11; ‘LA PLUME A NOS LECTURS : EN MARGE DU FESTIVAL – La généalogie et les mathématiques’, signed Marcel PETRON, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/09/1975, 8; ‘Ceux de Lifou ont manqué l’Edic’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 10/09/1975, 4.

³²⁷ Certain negative points were raised by both daily newspapers in the period leading up to the main festival, but these were not emphasised to the same extent. See, for example, ‘Les moustiques seront-ils présents à MELANESIA 2000 ?’, 6, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/08/1975; ‘LE BILLET DE L’AFFREUX JOJO’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/08/1975, 2; ‘MELANESIA 2000 – ON MET UNE DERNIERE MAIN AUX PREPARATIFS – Ouverture : MERCREDI’, *La France Australe*, 01/09/1975, 24.

³²⁸ Such division had not generally been foregrounded in earlier articles published by this newspaper, excepting those treating the May political controversy, discussed previously.

posited ‘consensual’ New Caledonia is constructed by LNC as unproblematically including (that is, effectively, assimilating) the majority of Kanak people (corresponding in the discourse of this newspaper to those in favour of *Mélanésie 2000* and including notably the associated Kanak ‘customary’ authorities). In contrast, a small, ‘deviant’ minority of Kanak people (constituted by those opposed to the festival and in favour of political independence) and their concerns are discursively ‘excluded’ from the sphere of ‘consensual’ (and therefore ‘legitimate’) social, cultural, and political action and discourse.

Thus, at the beginning of a prominent article published on the 9 September, entitled ‘*QUELQUES OPPOSANTS AU FESTIVAL VOULAIENT Y JETER LE TROUBLE*’, LNC affirms that:

[I]’*ORGANISATION de Mélanésie 2000 et son principe même n’ont pas fait l’unanimité parmi les Mélanésiens. Certains jeunes, politiquement très engagés, voyant là une mascarade qui leur déplaisait souverainement, ont très sérieusement étudié la possibilité de jeter le trouble au festival [...]*.³²⁹

This article goes on to outline the alleged plans to disrupt the event. However, according to the paper’s report, these so-called ‘*éventuels fauteurs de troubles*’ were prevented from executing their ‘*plan de réjouissances*’ by *Mélanésie 2000*’s ‘*responsables*’, who had put in place internal security measures to prevent any such eventuality.³³⁰ Significantly, this potential threat to *Mélanésie 2000* and its prevention are thus represented in this text as an exclusively Kanak affair – created, solved and of concern only to the Kanak people and groups involved in the festival and its organisation, on the one hand, and those opposed to the event, on the other.

In contrast, in another text published on the same page, the newspaper maintains that the ‘*quelques tentatives*’ to bring alcohol to the main-festival site in contravention of the

³²⁹ ‘*QUELQUES OPPOSANTS AU FESTIVAL VOULAIENT Y JETER LE TROUBLE*’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/09/1975, 5.

³³⁰ Ibid.

ban imposed by *Mélanésie 2000*'s organisers were prevented by the surveillance and intervention of the *Gendarmes*, '*chargés de la circulation et du rangement des voitures*'.³³¹ This text tends to reinforce negative stereotypes of Kanak people (individually and collectively) as drunkards and alcoholics. The problem of alcohol is represented as beyond the capabilities of the Kanak organisers and the internal, Kanak security to master without the (paternalistic) outside assistance of the *Gendarmes*. Moreover, the threat presented by alcohol is represented as relatively serious by LNC, given the relatively extreme (even disproportionate) measures of '*surveillance*' taken by the *Gendarmes*.³³² In the following edition, *Le Billet de l'Affreux Jojo* also refers to the *Gendarmes*' involvement at the festival.³³³ Thus, the police presence at the main-festival site and the apparent need for 'outside' (non-Kanak) regulation of the event is further foregrounded.³³⁴

Tjibaou articulated a very different perspective in a quotation published by LFA on the 9 September, in which he affirmed that the ban on alcohol imposed during the festival '*a été respecté par toutes les délégations*', and that the successful management of this problem was the result of the attitude and actions of the festival's Kanak participants, organisers and internal security.³³⁵ Moreover, Tjibaou is also cited by LFA as affirming that *Mélanésie 2000* successfully countered certain prevalent negative stereotypes of Kanak (mis)behaviour and their (in)ability to organise and realise such an event without 'outside' (non-Kanak) assistance.³³⁶ However, the extent to which *Mélanésie 2000* did counter such negative stereotypes and attitudes might be questioned, considering for instance the attention paid by LNC to the problem of preventing Kanak alcohol abuse

³³¹ 'PAS D'ALCOOL AU FESTIVAL', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/09/1975, 5.

³³² According to LNC, this surveillance '*s'est même traduite par quelques patrouilles maritimes en Boston Whaler le long des rives de Plage 1000*': *ibid.*

³³³ 'LE BILLET DE L'AFFREUX JOJO', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/09/1975, 1.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ 'M. JEAN-MARIE TJIBAOU, PRESIDENT DU COMITE ORGANISATEUR « MELANESIA 2000 A DEPASSÉ TOUTES NOS ESPÉRANCES »', *La France Australe*, 09/09/1975, 4.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

during the festival and the involvement of the *Gendarmes*, which appears to demonstrate the deeply entrenched nature of such stereotypes.³³⁷

Another example of LNC's tendency to emphasise various negative aspects or incidents and division within the Kanak community in relation to *Mélanésie 2000* is the considerable attention paid by this newspaper to the partial destruction by fire of the Lifou *grande case* on the main-festival site on the evening of the 7 September after the conclusion of the festival's official closing ceremony.³³⁸ The issue of LNC published on the 9 September includes the front-page headline: '*ACCIDENT OU MALVEILLANCE ? LA CASE DE LIFOU A FAILLI BRÛLER – SUSPECTÉ, NIDOISH NAISSELINE EST*

³³⁷ This is also apparent from various other articles published by both daily newspapers in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*. For example, three days before the main festival's commencement, LFA notes in one article: '[u]n point noir dans toute cette organisation : la présence d'alcool qui, dimanche soir, chauffait déjà (un peu trop) les esprits. Mais ne doutons pas que les quelques bouteilles vidées, le calme reviendra naturellement.' 'MELANESIA 2000 – ON MET UNE DERNIERE MAIN AUX PREPARATIFS – Ouverture : MERCREDI', *La France Australe*, 01/09/1975, 24. As noted previously, the problem of alcohol abuse within Kanak communities was itself a central focus of *Mélanésie 2000*'s organisers and the festival was aimed at addressing the posited root causes of alcoholism in Kanak communities (linked to the country's colonisation) through (internally) reaffirming and (externally) asserting a positive Kanak identity, reclaiming Kanak individual and collective dignity and seeking recognition by New Caledonia's non-Kanak inhabitants of the existence, specificity and legitimacy of Kanak culture, identity, values and way of life. However, this aim was not foregrounded in the coverage of the festival project published by the two daily newspapers. The ban on alcohol during the mini-festivals and the main festival was indicated only summarily and generally incidentally in the newspapers' coverage. Moreover, a leitmotif running throughout the articles published by LNC in relation to the completion of the various 'traditional' cases constructed on the main-festival site is the '*pot*', or celebratory drink, shared by their Kanak constructors. The discussion of the alcohol ban published by LNC subsequent to the main festival tends to emphasise Kanak attempts to circumvent its application. There is no discussion or analysis in the two daily newspapers' coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* of alcoholism as a serious problem facing Kanak individuals and communities, its causes and possible solutions. Rather, dominant negative stereotypes of Kanak people constructed around this particular social problem appear to be broadly reinforced by and perpetuated in these newspapers' coverage of the festival.

³³⁸ Note that LFA does not similarly foreground this fire incident. The only reference to it appears in a letter signed by '*Grands Chefs, les Petits Chefs et les Notables du Sud*' that is reproduced by the paper under the heading '*OPINION – EN MARGE DU FESTIVAL*'. The text of the letter is published without any commentary or introductory remarks and there is no headline relating to this incident on the front page of the newspaper. '*OPINION – EN MARGE DU FESTIVAL*', *La France Australe*, 10/09/1975, 4. This same letter is also reproduced by LNC, accompanied by some commentary and a front-page headline: see '*LA TENTATIVE D'INCENDIE DE LA CASE DE LIFOU – UNE INSULTE À LA COUTUME, nous écrivent les notables du sud, ELLE EST GRAVEMENT RESSENTIE PAR TOUTES LES DÉLÉGATIONS*', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 10/09/1975, 1; '*LA PLUME A NOS LECTEURS : En marge du Festival – L'INCENDIE DE LA CASE DE LIFOU : UNE INSULTE GRAVE POUR TOUTES LES DELEGATIONS*', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 10/09/1975, 5.

SÉRIEUSEMENT PRIS À PARTI.³³⁹ The associated article contains a report on the circumstances surrounding the fire incident and details several hypotheses. The newspaper notes the immediate reaction of the ‘chefs du Sud’ to accuse Naisseline (who was present at main-festival site at the time) of responsibility for the fire and to directly threaten him with violent retribution.³⁴⁰ According to this article, Naisseline was not harmed and, recognising that ‘l’accusé n’y était peut-être pour rien’, the ‘chefs du Sud chez qui s’est déroulé le festival’ consented to ‘faire la coutume’ with him before his departure from the festival site.³⁴¹ This article concludes:

*incendie volontaire ou non, les autorités coutumières et les chefs de Mélanésie 2000 ne pardonneront sans doute jamais aux extrémistes mélanésiens d’avoir seulement pu envisager l’incendie d’une grande case. C’est là un crime contre la coutume qui ne sera pas de bonne publicité pour les groupuscules politiques qui avaient projeté de troubler le festival.*³⁴²

As stated by Missotte: ‘Les Nouvelles exploitent l’incendie manqué de la case de Lifou [...] pour essayer d’effacer l’impression éventuelle d’unité du peuple kanak qu’on aurait pu retenir du festival.’³⁴³ LNC also used this incident to reinforce the newspaper’s particular discursive construction of New Caledonian society as predominantly and fundamentally ‘consensual’. For, in the newspaper’s discourse, *Mélanésie 2000* and its Kanak organisers, participants and supporters, as well as the so-called ‘*autorités coutumières et les chefs de Mélanésie 2000*’, are represented as sharing, defending and, indeed, as ‘proof’ of the social ‘consensus’ posited by the paper to exist in

³³⁹ ‘ACCIDENT OU MALVEILLANCE ? LA CASE DE LIFOU A FAILLI BRÛLER – SUSPECTÉ, NIDOISH NAISSLINE EST SÉRIEUSEMENT PRIS À PARTI’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/09/1975, 1.

³⁴⁰ ‘A Mélanésie 2000 – LA CASE DE LIFOU PREND MYSTERIEUSEMENT FEU’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/09/1975, 3.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid. Similar comments were made in the paper’s earlier article on the alleged plans to sabotage the event: see ‘QUELQUES OPPOSANTS AU FESTIVAL VOULAIENT Y JETER LE TROUBLE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/09/1975, 5.

³⁴³ Missotte (1985: 505).

contemporary New Caledonia. In contrast, the dissident, so-called ‘*extrémistes mélanésiens*’ are represented as posing a threat to that ‘consensus’ and their presence, views and concerns (particularly their support for political independence, although this not expressly referred to by the paper) are excluded from this construction of ‘consensual’ New Caledonian society and are consequently represented as marginal and illegitimate. This discursive representation of the fire incident and of *Mélanésie 2000* as a whole is further reinforced in articles published in subsequent editions of LNC.³⁴⁴

Le Journal Calédonien

Many similarities are identifiable in the coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*’s main festival and its *jeu scénique* published by LNC and LJC. In particular, LJC can be seen to mobilise the same discursive strategies as LNC to either occlude or excise particular aspects of the festival project (including particularly the second *tableau* of the *jeu scénique*, which is attributed to Dobbelaere’s posited illicit interference),³⁴⁵ and its associated radical socio-political message and implications. Like LNC, LJC consequently constructs the ‘legitimate’ festival project (defined as a purely ‘cultural’, a-political and politically

³⁴⁴ See ‘LA TENTATIVE D’INCENDIE DE LA CASE DE LIFOU – UNE INSULTE À LA COUTUME, nous écrivent les notables du sud, ELLE EST GRAVEMENT RESSENTIE PAR TOUTES LES DÉLÉGATIONS’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 10/09/1975, 1; ‘LA PLUME A NOS LECTEURS: En marge du Festival – L’INCENDIE DE LA CASE DE LIFOU: UNE INSULTE GRAVE POUR TOUTES LES DÉLÉGATIONS’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 10/09/1975, 5; ‘Le Billet de l’Affreux Jojo’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 10/09/1975, 20; ‘Grave injure à la coutume à Mélanésie 2.000’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/09/1975, 3.

³⁴⁵ See Jean GOTT VALLES, ‘FAUT-IL CRAINDRE MELANESIA 2000 ?’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 81, 03-09/09/1975, 5. Note that this article’s headline, which also appears on the front page of this edition, published on the day of the festival’s public opening ceremony and in print through the entire duration of the event, is significant for its possible impact on the paper’s readers as potential spectators, who could be deterred from attending.

irrelevant initiative of interest and relevance almost exclusively to Kanak people)³⁴⁶ as conformable to and confirmatory of the contemporary status quo.³⁴⁷

However, this weekly paper is more explicit than LNC in its discursive inscription of the very possibility of the festival project, along with its posited ultimate social, cultural and (implicitly) political significance, into the established framework of French New Caledonia. For example, in one article *Mélanésie 2000* is represented as an event which ‘*ne pouvait exister que dans un Territoire français*’, and at which the ‘*langue véhiculaire ne peut être que la langue française*’.³⁴⁸ Kanak agency in terms of the organisation and realisation of *Mélanésie 2000* itself is thus constructed as being predicated and dependent on the dominant Western socio-cultural, linguistic and political system in contemporary New Caledonia, so that any possibility of independent Kanak agency outside that system is effectively discursively occluded and foreclosed.

In another article, *Mélanésie 2000* is represented as having given Kanak ‘culture’ (defined restrictively as ‘folklore’) a place in the New Caledonian ‘*contexte culturel*’ as one of the many cultures ‘*qui [font] partie de cette petite France des antipodes*’.³⁴⁹ Indeed, according to this article, *Mélanésie 2000* ultimately aimed to:

faire comprendre à toutes les ethnies composant ce beau pays qu’elles possèdent des richesses culturelles exceptionnelles et en un mot de

³⁴⁶ On one occasion, *Mélanésie 2000* is thus represented as ‘*une super-kermesse organisée par et pour des Mélanésien*’: Jean GOTT VALLES, ‘FAUT-IL CRAINDRE MELANESIA 2000 ?’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 81, 03-09/09/1975, 5. This understanding of the festival is expressly identified in this article as being held by all of New Caledonia’s different non-Kanak communities (in addition to LJC itself).

³⁴⁷ See also particularly ‘MELANESIA 2000 : UNE REUSSITE EXCEPTIONNELLE’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 82, 10-16/09/1975, 7; Guièdre Wamedjo, ‘MELANESIA 2000 : UNE REUSSITE EXCEPTIONNELLE’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 82, 10-16/09/1975, 17; and see the introduction to the interview with Jean-Marie Tjibaou: ‘L’avocat du diable à cœur ouvert avec : Jean-Marie Tjibaou’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 4.

³⁴⁸ Indeed, the author states: ‘[o]n imagine en effet assez mal l’équivalent de cette manifestation dans un pays anglo-saxon.’ Jean GOTT VALLES, ‘FAUT-IL CRAINDRE MELANESIA 2000 ?’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 81, 03-09/09/1975, 5.

³⁴⁹ Guièdre Wamedjo, ‘MELANESIA 2000 : UNE REUSSITE EXCEPTIONNELLE’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 82, 10-16/09/1975, 17.

*définir avec éclat qu'on peut être français même en dansant le pilou, le tamouré, la bourrée ou la ronde des sables d'Olonne...*³⁵⁰

Mélanésie 2000 is thus represented as having been designed to illustrate the posited 'fact' that Kanak 'culture' (or rather, 'folklore') is ultimately compatible with, because subsumed by and subordinate to, the overarching (socio-political) framework of French culture and identity. Kanak people, culture and identity are thus placed on an equal footing with all people, cultures and identities within New Caledonia and the French Republic more broadly, and the indigenous character of Kanak people, culture and identity in New Caledonia is discursively occluded, along with its potential radical social, cultural and political implications for French New Caledonia.

The last two articles published by LJC with a primary focus on *Mélanésie 2000* can, however, be seen to deviate to some extent from or partially disrupt this paper's previously relatively consistent discursive representation of the festival's nature, message and significance. These articles, both published on the 17 September, are an interview with Jean-Marie Tjibaou³⁵¹ and an editorial signed by Pierre Maresca.³⁵²

For example, in his responses to LJC's questions, Tjibaou directly contradicts the newspaper's thesis that the second *tableau* of the *jeu scénique* was the result of Dobbelaere's illicit interference.³⁵³ On the other hand, while the different political

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ 'L'avocat du diable à cœur ouvert avec : Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 4-5.

³⁵² Pierre Maresca, 'EDITORIAL – L'ARTISTE', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 5. See also the previous discussion of this editorial.

³⁵³ Tjibaou thus affirms in relation to the *jeu scénique* that: '[c]'est moi qui ai proposé le thème en trois tableaux, et c'est lui [Dobbelaere] qui les a mis en forme.' This 'admission' is followed by LJC's question: '[v]ous vous défendez d'avoir voulu ridiculiser les Blancs. Comment auriez-vous interprété une pièce faite par des Européens, pour des Européens, dans laquelle on aurait représenté les Canaques d'une manière aussi grotesque ?' While Tjibaou acknowledges this interpretation as having been shared by many 'Européens', his response to this question clearly belies the intentional character of any such representation. Tjibaou states: '[j]e dois vous dire que je n'avais absolument pas prévu une telle réaction. En représentant les Européens sous forme de marionnettes, on a voulu faire quelque chose de tellement en dehors de la réalité que l'on n'a jamais pensé que cela pourrait choquer. C'est une attitude naïve de ma part. On a peut-être mal apprécié l'impact psychologique que cela pourrait avoir sur les Européens.' Nevertheless, Tjibaou goes on to state that it is 'regrettable que certains soient restés sur cette impression et qu'ils ne soient pas venus à Mélanésie 2000 pour cette raison.' In this connection, Tjibaou further

positions held by the newspaper and Tjibaou form a strong undercurrent throughout this interview,³⁵⁴ their direct confrontation is generally avoided, particularly through the adoption of a socio-cultural register by Tjibaou in his responses, effectively allowing for the articulation of his political position in an indirect, implicit and non-confrontational manner.³⁵⁵

The *Mélanésie 2000* project is itself identified by Tjibaou in this interview as an alternative means of social (and, implicitly, political) engagement, outside the formal political sphere. Tjibaou affirms in this connection that: '*[n]ous essayons de travailler actuellement d'une manière différente de celle des autres.*'³⁵⁶ Tjibaou then states:

*[o]n parle toujours de politique. Et l'on bute toujours sur les mêmes mots, on s'enferme toujours dans les mêmes failles de pensée, Autonomie, Indépendance, Calédonie Française... Il me semble que si l'on pensait l'avenir de la Nouvelle-Calédonie au niveau du plan culturel, on pourrait discuter des institutions du Territoire en dehors du domaine de la politique. En politique, on ne peut pas se permettre de rêver, on est tenu de proposer des solutions concrètes. Au niveau théâtral, c'est beaucoup plus simple. Mais ce n'est pas totalement vide, car cela permet d'échapper à certaines contraintes, cela laisse toute latitude pour inventer le monde de demain.*³⁵⁷

contents: '[o]n touche là le fond du problème calédonien. Les échanges ne se font qu'en petit groupe. Or, pour mieux se comprendre, il faudrait dire à tout le monde ce que l'on pense. Il faut arriver à amener sur la place publique certains problèmes tabous dont on n'ose parler qu'en petits comités. C'est là le problème de la culture en Calédonie: chacun garde jalousement pour lui sa manière de penser.' Ironically, Tjibaou himself can be seen to avoid directly expressing his own political position in this interview. Indeed, the 'problème de la culture en Calédonie' identified by Tjibaou in this passage might better be described as the political problem of New Caledonia (although these are intimately and inextricably interconnected, as discussed previously). 'L'avocat du diable à cœur ouvert avec: Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 5.

³⁵⁴ Note, however, that Tjibaou was yet to directly and publically engage in the domain of local politics.

³⁵⁵ See also in this connection Missotte (1985: 509).

³⁵⁶ 'L'avocat du diable à cœur ouvert avec: Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 5.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

Tjibaou articulates a similar perspective in his response to LJC's question relating to Dobbelaere's involvement in the project (framed in terms of his attempted 'politicisation' of the festival).³⁵⁸ In these responses, Tjibaou can be seen to challenge any purported division between 'politics' and 'culture', while attempting nevertheless to steer a different course to that in which the traditional 'political' concerns, disagreements and oppositions in the New Caledonian context remain salient. This allows Tjibaou to avoid expressing any clear or direct view in relation to the substantive political issue of the Kanak *revendication* of independence, a word and issue that is never directly expressed or confronted by Tjibaou or LJC in this interview.

In a break with all of its previous coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*, LJC's editorial signed Pierre Maresca and published underneath and at the end of this interview with Tjibaou (and therefore constituting the paper's last word on the festival) effectively denigrates and dismisses both the festival and Kanak culture itself. *Mélanésie 2000* is represented as a symptom and illustration of the the lamentable (purported) 'regression' and 'perversion' in New Caledonia of what is defined as the only 'authentic', 'valid' and 'valuable' culture – 'high' French/European/Western culture – and its increasing separation and disconnection from culture in France, Europe and the West.³⁵⁹

Les Calédoniens

The coverage and ultimate appraisal of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival and the nature of the project's overall message, objectives, significance and implications published in the two daily newspapers and LJC can be contrasted to the coverage and appraisal published in LC. As seen above, his publication identifies *Mélanésie 2000* as having engendered pan-Kanak unity and produced a revitalised and revalorised Kanak socio-

³⁵⁸ Tjibaou states: '[v]ous parlez de politisation. Je crois que l'on bute sur des mots, sur une question de terminologie. Les gens d'ici sont assez susceptibles sur le plan politique. Le pays est petit, et tout ce qui se dit d'une manière engagée prend une résonance [sic] profonde sur la population': *ibid.*

³⁵⁹ Pierre Maresca, 'EDITORIAL – L'ARTISTE', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 5.

cultural identity. The paper also explicitly identifies *Mélanésie 2000* as being intentionally inscribed in the political Kanak *revendication* of independence.

In its coverage of the September main festival, LC's representation and appraisal of the *jeu scénique* before and after its performance significantly changes.³⁶⁰ One prominent article in the edition published on the 4 September (the day after the main festival's official opening ceremony and before the performances of the *jeu scénique*) identifies certain internal contradictions and ambiguities in the *jeu scénique* and its intended message.³⁶¹ The paper maintains that the last *tableau* demonstrates a shift from colonial to neo-colonial relations between the Kanak and the non-Kanak (principally 'European') blocks in the contemporary New Caledonian context, of which LC is critical.³⁶²

The principal article on *Mélanésie 2000* in the following edition³⁶³ (the first produced subsequent to the conclusion of the main festival and the two performances of the *jeu scénique*) also treats the *jeu scénique*. This article signals a shift away from LC's

³⁶⁰ Recall that LC, particularly its Editor-in-Chief, Claude Nègre, was involved in the production of the three editions of *Mélanésie 2000*'s newspaper, published and sold during the main festival. This collaboration between LC and the festival's Organising Committee suggests the direct involvement of certain journalists in the main festival itself and, presumably, their direct contact with and privileged access to the festival's organisers and information in relation to the festival during this period. This could explain the change in and crystallisation of LC's interpretation and appraisal of the *jeu scénique* and its ultimate message and significance. It also appears that LC's direct dialogue with Jean-Marie Tjibaou, by means of an interview published subsequently in the paper ('Jean Marie TJIBAOU EXPLIQUE – L'ÊTRE et L'AVOIR différencient les deux cultures en présence: Kanak et Occidentale.', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 34, 25/09-01/10/1975, 3), influenced to some extent this change in perspective. This is also possibly confirmed by comments made in Jean-Paul Caillard, 'LES FASCISTES DE SALON', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 33, 18-24/09/1975, 2.

³⁶¹ See 'MELANESIA 2000 – Les Canaques sont morts. Vive le Kanak !', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 31, 04-10/09/1975, 3.

³⁶² Ibid. Based on its interpretation of the *jeu scénique* as a whole, LC thus warns: '[c]e n'est pas tout de reconnaître qu'on a été brimé, il faut encore ne pas avoir la naïveté de croire que « tout ça c'est du passé » et que désormais il va y avoir un échange fructueux entre Mélanésien et Européens. Le tableau final du jeu scénique nous donnera un bel exemple de ce nouveau « partage d'ignames ». [...] « Tu ne te vends pas, je te prends » disait le colonialiste. « Tu te vends, je t'achète » dis le néo-colonialiste.'

³⁶³ A total of three pages of photographs and commentary are devoted to the coverage and appraisal of the main festival in this edition. This coverage is also signalled on the front page of this edition by two large photographs of the *jeu scénique* accompanying the article's headline. 'MELANESIA 2000: LE GRAND RASSEMBLEMENT DE L'HISTOIRE KANAK', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 32, 11-17/09/1975, 1, 4-6.

previous emphasis on the inherent contradictions of *Mélanésie 2000* as a whole, which is now described (in this article's headline) as: '*LE GRAND RASSEMBLEMENT DE L'HISTOIRE KANAK*'.³⁶⁴ The short text accompanying two full pages of photographs depicting different parts of the *jeu scénique* particularly highlights its second *tableau*, which is represented as:

[stigmatisant] *l'incursion du monde blanc dans la vie paisible d'une tribu avec des caricatures du colonialisme représentées par des marionnettes géantes (peut-être une image que s'est faite le kanak de l'homme blanc à son arrivée).*³⁶⁵

At the end of this short text, LC characterises '[l]'ensemble du jeu scénique' as constituting: 'en définitive un témoignage de l'histoire calédonienne mis en scène à partir de souvenirs et de paroles kanak.'³⁶⁶ LC concludes: '[j]amais une telle évocation n'avait été produite et le monde Mélanésien peut en être fier, car elle marque aussi le lien entre un passé souvent nié et un avenir à conjuguer'.³⁶⁷

This recognition of the historical validity of the depiction of New Caledonia's colonisation and positive appraisal thereof, including its appropriately 'caricatural' use of marionettes to represent '*l'homme blanc à son arrivée*' from a Kanak perspective, can be directly contrasted to the strong criticism and, indeed, rejection of the *jeu scénique*'s representation of '*les Blancs*' and of New Caledonia's colonial history by both LNC and LJC. It can also be contrasted to LFA's virtually complete discursive occlusion of the *jeu scénique*.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 1. Indeed, in the introduction to this article LC affirms: '[p]lus grand rassemblement de l'histoire kanake, *Mélanésie 2000* marque à n'en douter, le début d'un nouveau cycle de vie, d'une nouvelle génération, comme 1946 il y a 29 ans, comme 1917 il y a 58 ans': *ibid.*, 6. 1946 was the year in which the 'code de l'Indigénat' was abolished: Leblic (2003: 300). 1917 was the year of the second largest Kanak uprising to take place during the official colonial period: Bensa (1990a: 181).

³⁶⁵ 'MELANESIA 2000: LE GRAND RASSEMBLEMENT DE L'HISTOIRE KANAK', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 32, 11-17/09/1975, 4.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 5.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

LC's highly positive evaluation of the *jeu scénique* is further reinforced in the main body of this article's text, which covers a full page.³⁶⁸ The lead, introductory section of text printed at the head of this page foregrounds LC's positive appraisal of the *jeu scénique*, which it identifies as '*la réussite du Festival [qui] lui donne tout son sens.*'³⁶⁹ For, according to LC:

*[e]n une heure et demie de représentation il concentre 122 ans d'évolution culturelle, évoquant l'essentiel des bouleversements économiques, sociaux et politiques, qui ont conduit à la fin des canaques et à la naissance du kanak.*³⁷⁰

In this article, the three parts of the *jeu scénique* are outlined and their meaning and significance interpreted. The first and second *tableaux* are treated as unproblematic, 'accurate' representations of the pre-colonial and colonial New Caledonian past.³⁷¹ The third *tableau*, which is identified as corresponding to '*l'époque actuelle*', is represented by LC as '*le plus important par son message final.*'³⁷²

LC asserts that the '*astuce*' of the last *tableau* (and, by extension, of the *jeu scénique* and of *Mélanésie 2000* as a whole) '*est qu'il peut être compris à plusieurs niveaux, et interprété de manière différente selon le degré de conscience de chaque spectateur.*'³⁷³

LC asserts that the '*échange blancs-kanaks*' depicted in the third *tableau*:

ne se situera pas au niveau des choses mais au niveau de leur signification. Nous voulons leur apprendre à avoir, ils veulent nous

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 6.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid. Note the resonance of this statement with the paper's earlier headline: 'MELANESIA 2000 – Les Canaques sont morts. Vive le Kanak !', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 31, 04-10/09/1975, 1.

³⁷¹ The second *tableau* is thus again praised by LC as a straightforward, comprehensive, factual and 'masterly' representation of '*la Colonialisme avec sa bonne conscience animant les marionnettes téléguidés par l'idéologie venue d'ailleurs*': *ibid.*

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid. Able to elaborate on all levels of interpretation, LC necessarily (if implicitly) places itself at the highest possible '*degré de conscience*'. LC is consequently represented as being able to understand the 'true' and integral message of the *jeu scénique* intended by its Kanak authors.

*apprendre à être. Là est la différence fondamentale entre nos deux cultures.*³⁷⁴

LC contends that, '[a]près la présentation du nouvel échange entre les valeurs occidentales et les valeurs kanakes',³⁷⁵ the conclusion of the third tableau is not

*« vivre l'occident et devenons des européens des antipodes » sur « un morceau de France projeté dans le Pacifique ». Au contraire le maître de cérémonies, reprenant la parole interrompue à l'arrivée des blancs, invite ceux-ci à venir faire cercle autour de lui : « C'était très intéressant tous vos trucs, semble-t-il leur dire il y a des choses pas mal là dedans, mais si vous deveniez kanakes vous ne croyez pas que ce serait encore mieux, pour nous et... pour vous ? ». Au début du 3e tableau, Kanaké posait la question aux blancs : « Êtes-vous sûrs que dans 100 ans la planète que vous dominez sera plus heureuse que l'était notre île quand vous l'avez conquise ? ». À la fin la haine est abattue, la discorde effacée. La joie éclate enfin et réunit blancs et kanaks dans une grande danse, nouvelle et KANAKE. La réponse est claire : « pour être heureux, comprenez nous, SOYEZ kanaks, dansez avec nous ».*³⁷⁶

When compared to the text of the *jeu scénique* itself, understood in light of the various other associated texts and statements made by the festival's Organising Committee (discussed in Annex 3), this passage can be identified as the most faithful and complete representation of the *jeu scénique*'s ultimate message and signification to appear in the contemporaneous local written press coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*.

³⁷⁴ Ibid. Note the correlation between this and the perspective articulated by Tjibaou in his interview with this newspaper (although Tjibaou represents this so-called 'fundamental difference' between Western and Kanak cultures and people in a less unqualified, reductive and essentialising manner): 'Jean Marie TJIBAOU EXPLIQUE – L'ÊTRE et L'AVOIR différencient les deux cultures en présence : Kanak et Occidentale.', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 34, 25/09-01/10/1975, 3, 2.

³⁷⁵ 'MELANESIA 2000: LE GRAND RASSEMBLEMENT DE L'HISTOIRE KANAK', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 32, 11-17/09/1975, 6. Note similarly the correlation between this and the perspective articulated by Tjibaou in: 'Jean Marie TJIBAOU EXPLIQUE – L'ÊTRE et L'AVOIR différencient les deux cultures en présence : Kanak et Occidentale.', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 34, 25/09-01/10/1975, 2.

³⁷⁶ 'MELANESIA 2000: LE GRAND RASSEMBLEMENT DE L'HISTOIRE KANAK', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 32, 11-17/09/1975, 6.

The treatment in this article of the involvement of the *Gendarmes* in the main festival and of the Lifou case fire incident can also notably be contrasted to their treatment by LNC. LC strongly criticises the attitude and actions of the '*services blancs*' during the main festival, which are accused of harassment and of unnecessary interference during the event on the pretext of possible intoxication and provocations.³⁷⁷ These actions are, moreover, identified by LC as being '*le produit d'une véritable discrimination raciste*' and as '*[faisant] le jeu de la droite et des ultras*.'³⁷⁸

LC also maintains that '*[l]'incendie de la case de Lifou [...] doit rester à sa juste dimension*'.³⁷⁹ While the paper states that this act '*sur le plan coutumier prend une dimension de criminalité*', it identifies the motivation behind it as follows:

*[e]n laissant planer le doute sur le bon déroulement du festival, les auteurs [de l'incendie] pensaient sans doute, à l'inverse des organisateurs qui voulaient plutôt resserrer les liens entre les participants, diviser les groupes.*³⁸⁰

However, LC defends the innocence of the radical Kanak militant groups who were opposed to the festival, stating that:

*si des courants d'idées de contradiction ont ouvertement critiqué le festival Mélanésie 2000, et pour certain, lancé un appel au boycott au niveau de la participation, jamais les opposants ne se sont engagés sur la voie de la violence.*³⁸¹

In the next edition of LC, the paper also reproduces a brief *Groupe 1878* communiqué in which it expressly denies any responsibility for the fire.³⁸² This communiqué and

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Ibid. Indeed, according to LC: '*[c]es opérations à courte vue, ne peuvent être que la fruit d'éléments réactionnaires, seulement prêts à ignorer l'événement et à faire en sorte que l'opinion s'en désintéresse au point de le stigmatiser et de l'ignorer.*'

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² 'COMMUNIQUÉ DU GROUPE 1878', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 33, 18-24/09/1975, 7.

express denial of responsibility were not, however, reported by any other local newspaper.

While, on the one hand, LC identifies *Mélanésie 2000* as ‘le grand rassemblement de l’histoire kanak’³⁸³ and as tending towards, if not engendering, Kanak social, cultural and political unity,³⁸⁴ on the other, the paper maintains that the attitude demonstrated by the ‘European’-dominated local authorities and services, the written press and the conservative local and national political representatives in relation to the festival demonstrates the persisting ‘*mépris d’une existence culturelle*’ and anti-Kanak racism posited as dominant within New Caledonia’s non-Kanak community.³⁸⁵

Two final articles published by LC in relation to *Mélanésie 2000* are particularly significant.³⁸⁶ The headline of the first of these articles runs: ‘*vers un regroupement melanésien [sic] ?*’³⁸⁷ This article directly and explicitly links: *Mélanésie 2000* (discussed as a specifically and primarily Kanak event) and its objectives; the emergence of Kanak socio-cultural unity; and the political movement and *revendication* of Kanak independence.³⁸⁸ All of these subjects are represented positively and are supported by LC in this article. As highlighted previously, no other local newspaper directly and explicitly draws such a link, constructed as corresponding to the intentions and perspective of the festival’s Kanak organisers and participants.

³⁸³ ‘MELANESIA 2000: LE GRAND RASSEMBLEMENT DE L’HISTOIRE KANAK’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 32, 11-17/09/1975, 6.

³⁸⁴ ‘vers un regroupement melanésien [sic] ?’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 33, 18-24/09/1975, 1, 5.

³⁸⁵ ‘MELANESIA 2000: LE GRAND RASSEMBLEMENT DE L’HISTOIRE KANAK’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 32, 11-17/09/1975, 6.

³⁸⁶ ‘vers un regroupement melanésien [sic] ?’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 33, 18-24/09/1975, 1, 5; ‘Jean Marie TJIBAOU EXPLIQUE – L’ÊTRE et L’AVOIR différencient les deux cultures en présence : Kanak et Occidentale.’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 34, 25/09-01/10/1975, 2, 3.

³⁸⁷ This title also appears on the front page of this edition: ‘vers un regroupement melanésien [sic] ?’, *Les Calédoniens*, no. 33, 18-24/09/1975, 1.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1, 5.

Mélanésie 2000 is represented in this article as having opened ‘*la voie à de nouvelles perspectives pour l’avenir*’,³⁸⁹ which are themselves identified in this text as ultimately being related to ‘*l’idée profonde de l’indépendance KANAK*’.³⁹⁰ This idea is represented as having been kept ‘*en sommeil*’ by the ‘*étrangers qui ont depuis 122 ans profité de l’accueil, bénéficié de l’hospitalité et du respect qui constituent une richesse culturelle des mélanésiens*’.³⁹¹ The references in this passage to ‘*étrangers*’, ‘*accueil*’, ‘*hospitalité*’ and ‘*respect*’ appear to indicate LC’s adoption of a perspective on colonisation understood through the prism of the Kanak ‘customary’ mode of *accueil*, in a similar manner to the last *tableau* of the *jeu scénique* (although in that *tableau*, unlike the reality of the socio-political situation persisting in New Caledonia in 1975, the Kanak ‘*droit d’accueil*’ is ultimately recognised, restituted and realised).

LC posits that: ‘*[p]our ou contre Mélanésie 2000 les Mélanésiens (du Nord au Sud d’Est en Ouest) ont dans leur profond intérieur un objectif commun : l’indépendance Kanak.*’³⁹² This view is reinforced by the paper’s construction of the Kanak *revendication* of independence as ‘natural’ and as ultimately stemming from ‘universal’ principles of ‘natural law’ and from the very ‘*existence de l’ethnie Kanak*’.³⁹³ LC thus posits this Kanak *revendication* and independence itself as an immutable, natural law ‘right’, despite its opposition by the so-called ‘*ethnie des possédants*’. The paper asserts a shared

sentiment mélanésien d’IMPATIENCE et de NATIONALISME. [...]
Impatience parce que les problèmes événementiels tels que les rapports

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 1.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 5.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid. The lack of any ‘incidents’ during *Mélanésie 2000*’s main festival is represented in this article as demonstrating the shared nature of this goal of independence among and ‘within’ Kanak people, because ‘*les « pour ou contre » Mélanésie 2000 ont idéologiquement un objectif d’émancipation et l’objectif il faudrait le raccourcir. « Quoique nous emprunions des itinéraires différents pourvu que nous arrivions au même but ».*’ Moreover, the posited universally shared nature of this Kanak goal is also identified by LC as having been readily apparent during the course of *Mélanésie 2000*’s main festival itself. The paper affirms in this connection that: ‘*[m]ême en plein FESTIVAL on peut constater que sur le visage des Mélanésiens se lit et se dessine un sentiment non seulement de fierté mais aussi d’indépendantiste*’.

³⁹³ Ibid.

*de force ou rapports économiques sont constamment en défaveur des premiers occupants. NATIONALISME parce que l'unité de la race mélanésienne vient de s'affirmer et de retrouver sa peau KANAK par le biais de ce FESTIVAL.*³⁹⁴

It is in this light that LC evokes 'l'après-FESTIVAL', implicitly placing at its centre the 'pari politique' of Kanak independence.³⁹⁵ In this article, LC can be seen to explicitly attribute to *Mélanésie 2000* more direct, concrete and immediate political outcomes and implications (for the future of Kanak people as a unified collectivity and for the country as a whole) than the festival's local organisers themselves in their public discourse.

The implicit nature of *Mélanésie 2000*'s political message and implications in the public discourse of its organisers at the time is apparent in the last significant article published by LC in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*, constituted by an extended interview with Tjibaou entitled: 'JM. TJIBAOU – L'ÊTRE et L'AVOIR différencient les deux cultures : Kanak et Occidentale'.³⁹⁶ The questions asked in this interview cover three principal subjects: the signification of the *jeu scénique*; the 'fundamental differences' between Kanak and Western cultures; and the broader significance of *Mélanésie 2000* in terms of Kanak culture (in the past and the present), Kanak unity and Kanak relations with the other groups in New Caledonian society.³⁹⁷ None of these questions, nor any of Tjibaou's responses, link *Mélanésie 2000* and its objectives, including that of engendering Kanak socio-cultural unity, explicitly to any particular, express political position, *revendication* or movement. However, the political nature of the festival's objectives, message, significance and implications is apparent implicitly in the discourse articulated both by LC and by Tjibaou.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ 'JM. TJIBAOU – L'ÊTRE et L'AVOIR différencient les deux cultures : Kanak et Occidentale.', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 34, 25/09-01/10/1975, 1, 2, 3.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 2, 3.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 1, 2, 3.

Tjibaou's responses in this interview can be seen to broadly express the same perspective as that articulated by him in his interview with LJC³⁹⁹ and, indeed, in his initial 1974 document outlining the reasons for and objectives of the festival project.⁴⁰⁰ On the other hand, *Mélanésie 2000* is expressly affirmed by both Tjibaou and LC in this interview as having also been a '*rassemblement mélanésien autour du symbole de l'unité*'⁴⁰¹ – a theme which is not raised in these two earlier instances.⁴⁰²

However, as it is articulated by Tjibaou in this interview, this theme of Kanak unity is intimately associated with the nature of the continuing relationship of Kanak people as a group with the country's other ethno-cultural communities in the present and into the future. Thus, Tjibaou's concluding statement runs:

*[c]e festival permet au groupe Mélanésien de dire sa présence aujourd'hui en Nouvelle-Calédonie. Mais ce n'est pas une rencontre fermée aux autres groupes du Territoire. Si on tend à rechercher une unité c'est plutôt dans le sens d'une recherche interne pour nous et cela est même possible dans la perspective de rencontrer les autres. Le groupe Mélanésien doit retrouver sa fierté après s'être renié pour des valeurs nouvelles qui aujourd'hui le laisse sur sa faim en invitant les autres à partager ses propres valeurs.*⁴⁰³

The objective of engendering and publicly affirming Kanak unity and presence is clearly inscribed by Tjibaou in a broader perspective and objective in relation to the nature of the Kanak community's relationship to the country's other communities and

³⁹⁹ 'L'avocat du diable à cœur ouvert avec : Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 4-5; and see the discussion above.

⁴⁰⁰ Tjibaou in Missotte (1995b: 66-69); and see the discussion above.

⁴⁰¹ 'Jean Marie TJIBAOU EXPLIQUE – L'ÊTRE et L'AVOIR différencient les deux cultures en présence : Kanak et Occidentale.', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 34, 25/09-01/10/1975, 2.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 3. For example, in response to LC's question '*EST-CE QUE POUR LES KANAKS MÉLANÉSIA 2000 VA AVOIR UNE RÉPERCUSSION SUR LE PLAN DE L'UNITÉ KANAK*', Tjibaou states: '[a]h, je pense. Tout les vieux qui sont venu, [sic] ils se sont senti Kanak ensemble, un peu plus fier [sic] d'être Kanak. Lorsqu'on leur a dit, au niveau des points soleil que l'on voulait faire une fête Kanak, qu'il faudrait mettre le paquet, qu'un Kanak libre c'est un homme debout et non pas un type dans le fossé, ils ont compris, ils nous l'ont montré par la suite.'

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 2.

the posited need for the transformation of that relationship, so as to give rise to a shared, harmonious future.⁴⁰⁴ Thus, as stated in 1995 by Joseph Caihe:

*la situation de l'époque ne nous permettait pas de parler politique [...].
Jean-Marie Tjibaou ne parlait pas d'indépendance mais son discours
coutumier était teinté d'un certain positionnement politique par rapport
aux différentes communautés du Territoire.*⁴⁰⁵

The impact of *Mélanésie 2000* and its transformatory politics of Kanak culture and identity in the subsequent period

As noted by Missotte, *Mélanésie 2000* had '[d]es suites incertaines' in the immediate future.⁴⁰⁶ The two primary means for the concrete prolongation of the festival project identified at the time of *Mélanésie 2000*'s conclusion were associated with the potential future use of the main-festival site and the possibility of organising one or more future festivals. However, as discussed in Annex 4, neither of these possible avenues was successfully pursued in the years following the festival.

In terms of the more intangible, social impacts of *Mélanésie 2000* on the country's population, various commentators have identified certain 'internal' (Kanak) and 'external' (non-Kanak) impacts, although there are conflicting views on their precise nature and extent, particularly in terms of whether the festival project engendered a new consciousness and reality of pan-Kanak social, cultural and political unity. In terms of

⁴⁰⁴ This discourse is equally apparent in the various reports of the public speeches made by members of the Organising Committee, including Tjibaou himself, during the opening and closing ceremonies of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival. See particularly 'L'espoir d'une Calédonie fraternelle', *Mélanésie : journal du festival*, no. 1, September 1975, 2, reproduced in Missotte, Annex (1985: 80); 'CÉRÉMONIE D'OUVERTURE DU FESTIVAL : La parole n'est pas tombée...', *Mélanésie : journal du festival*, no. 1, September 1975, 3, reproduced in Missotte, Annex (1985: 81); 'Ce n'est qu'un au revoir', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/09/1975, 5. It is also apparent in a number of the texts included in the Festival Program: see Bonnabesse and Missotte (1975).

⁴⁰⁵ Trolue and Caihe (1995: 161).

⁴⁰⁶ Missotte (1995b: 96).

the relationship between the country's Kanak and non-Kanak (particularly 'European') populations, it is worth noting that several of the individuals involved have, in their subsequent '*témoignages*', attributed to *Mélanésie 2000* a general increase in the respect given to Kanak people in New Caledonia.⁴⁰⁷ Guiart has suggested that the most 'spectacular' and 'durable' result of the festival was its institution of a shared 'language' – identified as that of the *jeu scénique* – which he maintains became '*un langage de référence entre Canaques et Européens*'.⁴⁰⁸ However, the radical transformation of New Caledonian society called for and projected in *Mélanésie 2000*'s *jeu scénique* was not produced by the festival itself and did not take place in its wake.

Indeed, despite Tjibaou's plea in his initial 1974 document in relation to the festival project for the institution of '*un dialogue plus profond et plus suivi entre la culture européenne et la culture autochtone*' through the '*reconnaissance (RE-NAÎTRE-AVEC) réciproque des deux cultures dans ce qu'elles ont de spécifique*',⁴⁰⁹ no such broad, inter-ethnic recognition, understanding and dialogue appear to have been engendered through the 1975 festival. The contemporaneous coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* published by the two daily newspapers and LJC can be seen to demonstrate rather the perpetuation of the '*dialogue de sourds*' identified by Tjibaou as characterising New Caledonian society at the time.⁴¹⁰

As seen in this Chapter, the contemporaneous coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* published by the dominant, 'mainstream' and conservative press mobilised a number of discursive strategies which worked to occlude and/or foreclose *Mélanésie 2000*'s transformative politics of Kanak culture and identity. In the coverage of LNC, LFA and LJC, the country's colonial past and its continuing impacts and significance in the present were discursively occluded and/or neutralised through the construction of a radical

⁴⁰⁷ As indicated, for example, by the posited change from the general use of the '*tu*' to the '*vous*' form by 'Europeans' when addressing Kanak interlocutors – see Pwârâpwépwe (1995: 149); Marie-Claude Tjibaou (1995: 121).

⁴⁰⁸ Guiart (1996: 110).

⁴⁰⁹ Tjibaou in Missotte (1995b: 67).

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

disjuncture between that past, on the one hand, and the present and the future, on the other. No special character or privileged position was acknowledged as attaching to Kanak people, culture and identity as indigenous to the country. The political significance of the Kanak 'customary' inscription of the festival's organisation and ultimate political message were not acknowledged or highlighted – indeed, Kanak 'custom' was itself generally constructed as 'cultural' rather than 'political' in character. Kanak agency in relation to the festival's transformative political message was discursively occluded through the attribution of responsibility (and culpability) for the 'dissident', political elements of the festival to the Metropolitan–French specialists hired by the event's Kanak organisers. Overall, the festival project was discursively constructed by the 'mainstream', conservative local press as an essentially a-political, Kanak event of minimal lasting or broader significance. *Mélanésie 2000* was also represented as entirely congruent with and confirmatory of the posited social 'consensus' and socio-political status quo in contemporary French New Caledonia, and the (purportedly legitimate) indefinite perpetuation of that status quo.

Increasing conflict would surround the politics of Kanak culture and identity associated with various 'cultural' projects and events during the period between *Mélanésie 2000*'s conclusion in 1975 and the finalisation of the Matignon Accords in 1988. As discussed in Annex 4, this increasing conflict was intimately interlinked to the political struggle for and against independence which produced the period of violence and civil unrest during the 1980s known euphemistically as '*les événements*'. With the benefit of hindsight, in light of this social and political conflict and violence which led New Caledonia to the point of civil war, Tjibaou's identification in 1974 of meaningful and respectful inter-cultural recognition and dialogue as the necessary precondition for the future '*santé*'⁴¹¹ of New Caledonia and his contention that '*[L]a non-reconnaissance qui crée l'insignifiance et l'absence de dialogue culturel ne peut amener qu'au suicide ou à la révolte*'⁴¹² appear to have been vindicated.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 69.

⁴¹² Ibid., 67.

The extremely violent episode which took place on Ouvéa in May 1988⁴¹³ served as the catalyst for the opening of negotiations between the FLNKS, the RPCR and the French State (represented by the new, socialist Prime Minister, Michel Rocard) in the following months and the conclusion of the first lasting peace agreement between these parties: the 1988 Matignon Accords.⁴¹⁴ On the 4 May 1989 – the eve of the ‘customary’ ceremony marking the end of the year-long period of mourning for the 19 Kanak men killed at the conclusion of the Ouvéa tragedy – Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Yeiwéné Yeiwéné were assassinated on Ouvéa by a pro-Kanak independence militant from the island, Djubelly Wéa, who felt the two FLNKS leaders had betrayed their people by signing the 1988 Accords.⁴¹⁵ However, despite this second tragedy, the peace and stability ushered in by the conclusion the Matignon Accords were maintained for the agreement’s full term of ten years.⁴¹⁶

The Matignon Accords agreement included among its conditions the creation of a State administrative institution devoted to the preservation, development and promotion of Kanak culture – the *Agence de développement de la culture canque* (which subsequently

⁴¹³ See the discussion in Annex 4.

⁴¹⁴ The Matignon Accords agreement was reached in two phases. The first part of the agreement was concluded at the Prime Minister’s residence, the *Hôtel de Matignon*, on the 26 June 1988 and the second, two months later at the *Ministère de l’Outre-Mer, rue Oudinot*, on the 20 August. These two Accords are collectively referred to as the Matignon Accords. For the texts of these Accords, accompanied by other relevant documents, see Government of New Caledonia, ed., *Accords de Matignon–Oudinot, Texte intégral des accords intervenus, le 26 juin 1988, sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, <<http://www.nouvelle-caledonie.gouv.fr/site/Media/Fichiers/Accords-de-Matignon-Oudinot>> (*‘Accords de Matignon–Oudinot’*). See also Rocard (1988).

⁴¹⁵ Wéa was himself then shot and killed by Tjibaou’s bodyguard, Daniel Fisdépas. On Waddell’s account, Wéa and members of his family and community had been tortured by the French military during the hostage crisis (Wéa’s father subsequently died as a result): see Waddell (2008: 22-30). Note that while numerous authors characterise Djubelly Wéa as an ‘extremist’, the CCT/ADCK website states that Tjibaou was assassinated *‘par un indépendantiste opposant’*: CCT/ADCK, ‘Présentation : Le Centre Culturel Tjibaou : Biographie de Jean-Marie Tjibaou’, 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/le-centre-culturel-tjibaou/jean-marie-tjibaou>>. In 2004, a process of inter-Kanak *‘pardon’* and reconciliation was undertaken between the principal individuals and families concerned by this tragedy (Tjibaou; Yéweiné; Wéa; Fisdépas) and their respective communities (in Tiendanite, Hienghène; Tadine, Maré; Gossanah, Ouvéa; Tenem, Hienghène). See ‘Pardon et réconciliation’, *Mwà Vée*, nos 46/47, October-December 2004/January-March 2005.

⁴¹⁶ As noted by Brown, this event was considered at the time to potentially threaten the peace agreement enshrined in the Matignon Accords, ‘even before their real implementation’: Brown (1998: 127).

became the *Agence de développement de la culture kanak*). As discussed in the next Chapter, it was within the context and dynamic of the Matignon Accords framework that the project to construct a Kanak cultural centre in Noumea, later named the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou*, was elaborated and brought to fruition.

CHAPTER TWO

The inauguration of the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou* and ambiguities in the local written press: the Centre as Kanak nationalist project, French nationalist project or symbol of the Noumea Accord project

Inaugurated in May 1998, the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou*¹ is a multifunctional cultural complex situated on an eight-hectare site on the Tina Peninsula on Noumea's outskirts. In addition to its other functions, the CCT houses the *Agence de développement de la culture kanak*. As well as having played a key role in initiating the CCT project and in framing and overseeing its realisation, the ADCK is responsible for the Centre's continued animation and functioning. As they exist today, the CCT and the ADCK are thus intimately interlinked and can be seen to constitute New Caledonia's foremost cultural institution(s).

The CCT(/ADCK) is a significant symbol, as well as a site, tool and agent of social, cultural and political action and interaction. Both the CCT and the ADCK are primarily dedicated to and focused on 'Kanak culture', past–present–future. However, the CCT and its programs also place a strong emphasis on culture and art from Oceania more broadly, as well as being oriented towards a local, regional and international tourist market. Moreover, the Centre is often represented in contemporary ADCK discourse as being open to and, to some generally undefined extent, inclusive of New Caledonia's established non-Kanak ethno-cultural communities. The Centre is thus effectively geared towards many different registers of representation, action and interaction, from

¹ The CCT is also named '*ngan jila*', an appellation which appears on the Centre's logo in addition to its official name, *Centre Culturel Tjibaou*. The English brochure freely available at the CCT in 2009, entitled *Tjibaou cultural centre – welcome* and briefly outlining the Centre's history and providing a map and an explanation of its various elements, identifies '*ngan jila*' as signifying both 'the house of riches' and 'cultural centre' 'in the language of Jean-Marie Tjibaou, "pije".'

the individual (both Kanak and non-Kanak) to the inter-Kanak, the New Caledonian, the 'national' (within the French Republic), the regional (Pacific) and the international.

The Centre consequently constitutes a highly complex site and agent of representation and legitimation, the nature of which has been continually changing since the CCT project was first conceived, in relation to the changing social, cultural and political context within which it is embedded. Through the combination of the physical form of the CCT and its various functions and programs,² and the CCT's discursive construction in the public domain (including in the local written press), the Centre can be seen to engage in complex ways with the individuals and groups who come into contact with it. The different ways in which the CCT and its discursive representation in the local written press might work to render salient particular identities, particular modes of understanding, action and interaction, and particular orientations in relation to the past, the present and the future, are of key significance to the present study.

This Chapter focuses primarily on the representations of the CCT in 1998 in the local written press coverage of its official inauguration on the 4 May (the anniversary of Jean-Marie Tjibaou's death in 1989), and the additional inauguration-related events on the 5 May (also the date of the official signing of the Noumea Accord). The Centre's inauguration was later followed by the opening of the CCT to the general public from the 16 June, celebrated with several free open days and nights and a contemporary arts

² The CCT can be identified as functioning variously as: a socio-political symbol; an architectural and historical public monument and memorial space; a museum (exemplifying in particular what are now referred to as 'new museums'); an art gallery and collector; a cultural centre with venues for live music and dance performances, audio-visual screenings, talks and conferences; a place of contemporary artistic and cultural creation, promotion, training and professionalisation; a pedagogical, archival and library facility; the office and facilities of the ADCK; a site inscribed in particular Kanak 'customary' understandings, practices and legitimations; and a local, regional and international tourist destination. This multifunctional character is highlighted on the CCT/ADCK's official website, which consequently concludes: '*[o]util et symbole, ouvert à tous les publics, le centre culturel Tjibaou est un équipement culturel atypique [...]. Le projet se veut un lieu d'identification de la culture kanak et de son pays, de production culturelle, de transformation sociale, moteur du pays et enraciné sur l'ensemble du Pacifique sud.*' Original emphasis, CCT/ADCK, 'Présentation : L'Agence de développement de la culture kanak : Projet architectural', 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/lagence-de-developpement-de-la-culture-kanak/projet-architectural>>.

festival, ‘*Cabo Ko*’,³ showcasing local and Pacific theatre, dance, music and the plastic arts. The interest of the inauguration is manifold, stemming from the fact that it constituted an important local event through and in relation to which the CCT’s nature, orientations, legitimacy and significance within the broader changing socio-political context of New Caledonia – its particular politics of Kanak culture and identity – were represented and constructed.

The way in which the inauguration was conceived and structured by its organisers (working in or with the ADCK), particularly through incorporating the participation of certain Kanak groups and ‘customary’ representatives, was designed to make Kanak people the key actors and agents in relation to the inauguration itself, as well as in relation to the establishment of the Centre’s missions and legitimacy. The inauguration was thus structured around a number of Kanak ‘customary’ ceremonies, themselves the culmination of a lengthy ‘*démarche coutumière*’ engaged by representatives of the ADCK with a view to establishing the Centre’s specifically Kanak, ‘customary’ legitimacy and with a view to directly implicating the country’s Kanak population as a whole in the CCT project in an attempt to engender their acceptance, approbation and appropriation of the Centre into the future. This ‘*démarche coutumière*’ was thus represented by the ADCK and those involved as the necessary precondition of the legitimacy and success of the CCT, as a specifically and primarily Kanak cultural centre.

In addition to this Kanak ‘customary’ aspect, the inauguration also represented the culmination of a lengthy process of design and construction that was itself inscribed in and rendered possible by the particular New Caledonian and Metropolitan French political contexts as they evolved during the Matignon Accords period. However, the inauguration of the Centre on the 4 May 1998 was also inscribed in the new political context produced by the finalisation of the Noumea Accord agreement. As discussed in

³ According to LNC’s report, ‘*Cabo Ko*’ means ‘*levez-vous !*’ in the Kanak language of *Gomen*: Marcel Martin, ‘Le Centre Culturel Tjibaou ouvre ses portes le 15 juin – Ngan jila Tjibaou, la maison des richesses’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 30/05/1998, 6.

the Introduction, the Noumea Accord articulated its own politics of Kanak culture and identity, identified as the necessary precondition and foundation of the Accord's broader project of constructing a peaceful 'common destiny' to be shared by all of New Caledonia's 'citizens' into the future.

In order to fully appreciate the significance and impact of this change in the local political context for the CCT, its inauguration and the local print-media coverage thereof, it is necessary to consider the initial conception of the CCT project and its development throughout the 1990s. From such a consideration it becomes apparent that the inauguration of the Centre at this particular political juncture significantly contributed to the modulation of the various discursive representations in the local public domain (including those articulated in and through the local written press) of the CCT's orientations and signification.

As noted by Kylie Message, the CCT broadly fits the description and analysis of 'mediated monuments' put forward by Lawrence Vale as 'monuments that are inseparable from the media campaigns conducted to construct (and constrict) their interpretation.'⁴ The ADCK, equipped with its own 'Communications Department', worked from the outset to engage the local, metropolitan and international media in relation to the CCT project, an engagement facilitated by the high profile of the project and its architectural realisation as one of the last '*Grands Travaux de la République*'.⁵ This media engagement culminated in the 1998 inauguration, attended by local politicians, high-level French Government representatives⁶ as well as by political representatives from countries throughout the Pacific region. This significant local, national and foreign presence for the inauguration was also associated with the official signing of the Noumea Accord. The ensuing local, metropolitan and international media

⁴ Vale (1999: 391). See also Message (2006: 23).

⁵ See the discussion below.

⁶ These included the French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, Minister of Culture Catherine Trautmann, the State Secretary for Overseas Departments and Territories Jean-Jack Queyranne, former Prime Minister Michel Rocard and former Minister of Culture Jack Lang.

frenzy surrounding the CCT's inauguration⁷ (and the Noumea Accord's signing) provoked certain reservations and criticism from various local actors, including some local journalists, who decried the '*surmédiation*' of the inauguration and the (posited) political bias of some media coverage of the events taking place in New Caledonia.

The most substantial coverage of the CCT's inauguration was provided on local television: as noted by Briffa, the event '*a mobilisé les équipes de RFO Nouvelle-Calédonie aidées de nombreux professionnels métropolitains, pendant 8 heures, en direct.*'⁸ The local daily newspaper LNC also published substantial coverage of the CCT and its inauguration in 1998, including an eight-page special supplement in its edition dated 5 May in addition to numerous detailed articles in the months leading up to and following the inauguration.⁹ *Les Nouvelles Hebdo* published considerably less coverage of the inauguration in comparison to the daily newspaper and was highly critical of the event's purported '*surmédiation*'.¹⁰ The newly established satirical monthly paper, *Le Chien bleu*, did not include any sustained coverage of the inauguration – its piecemeal treatment of this topic was constituted by numerous brief criticisms of certain aspects of the CCT and its inauguration, focusing on different mishaps, controverses and the purportedly self-interested motivations of the key actors and politicians involved. The regional monthly publication *Tour de Côte* contained an eleven-page '*dossier*' on the inauguration.¹¹ Its Loyalty Islands counterpart *Construire les Loyautés* devoted one and a half pages to the event.¹²

⁷ According to LCB, the CCT's own '*service de presse*' was '*[d]ébordé [...] lors de l'inauguration*': '*Un service de presse débordé*', *Le Chien bleu*, no. 2, 1998, 1.

⁸ Briffa (2002: 73).

⁹ Another eight-page special supplement was published with information on the arts festival *Cabo Ko* launched with the CCT's opening to the public in mid-June.

¹⁰ LNH was still sold and distributed each Thursday with LNC at this time – see the discussion in the Introduction.

¹¹ Recall that this paper, devoted to '*la brousse*', is owned by the same media conglomerate as LNC – see the discussion in the Introduction.

¹² CLL is produced by the Loyalty Islands Province – see the discussion in the Introduction.

Before turning to the analysis of this local print-media coverage of the CCT, its inauguration and the complex dynamics of the politics of Kanak culture and identity engaged through and associated with this project at different times by different actors, it is important to consider the particular context in and from which the CCT project emerged and developed.

The Matignon Accords and the creation of the ADCK

The 1988 Matignon Accords agreement¹³ and the ensuing statutory regime¹⁴ were designed to restore peace and social, political, economic and institutional stability to New Caledonia.¹⁵ The process of ‘*rééquilibrage*’ in favour of the Kanak population was central to the Matignon Accords agreement – as stated by Tjibaou in an interview in September 1988: ‘[p]artager l’avenir restera une espérance sans lendemain si on ne partage pas le présent.’¹⁶ The Assemblies of the three Provinces were given a large area

¹³ *Accords de Matignon–Oudinot*.

¹⁴ Following the conclusion of the Matignon Accords agreement in June and August 1988, a law ‘*portant dispositions statutaires et préparatoires à l’autodétermination de la Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1998*’ was prepared. This was formally enacted in French law in the *Loi n° 88-1028 du 9 novembre 1988*, following its approval in a national referendum held on the 6 November 1988. See *Loi °88-1028 du 9 novembre 1988 portant dispositions statutaires et préparatoires à l’autodétermination de la Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1998*, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 10 November 1998, 14087, <<http://www.congres.nc/textes-fondamentaux>> ; <<http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/11/dossiers/Nouvelle-caledonie/881028.asp>> (*‘Loi °88-1028 du 9 novembre 1988 portant dispositions statutaires et préparatoires à l’autodétermination de la Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1998’*).

¹⁵ This was to be achieved primarily through: deferring the question of independence for a period ten years; establishing a new institutional structure and instituting a program of ‘*rééquilibrage*’ during the period covered by the Accords, designed to redress the persisting, overwhelming disadvantage and marginalisation of the Kanak population within New Caledonia; and defining and fixing the modalities of the definitive resolution of the question of independence at the end of the period covered by the agreement, by means of a referendum with an electorate restricted broadly to people on the Territory’s electoral roll who were permanent residents in New Caledonia from the date of the 1988 referendum relating to the Matignon Accords. The new local institutional structure created by the Matignon Accords was based on a two-fold regional subdivision of the New Caledonian archipelago into, on the one hand, three politico-administrative Provinces (as the basis of local democratic political representation, above the level of the ‘*commune*’) and, on the other, eight Kanak ‘customary’ ‘*aires coutumières*’ (as the basis of local Kanak ‘customary’ representation).

¹⁶ Tjibaou (1996: 280). In the schema of the Matignon Accords, the role attributed to the French State was that of ‘neutral’, ‘impartial’ guarantor of the agreement and of its faithful and full application, including

of competence, which allowed the predominantly Kanak and pro-independence Northern and Islands Provinces to exercise a relatively large degree of political autonomy. In addition to a number of other initiatives, *rééquilibrage* was also given effect through the introduction of a fixed proportional distribution of the finances supplied by the French State to the Provinces, with three-quarters of the funding going to the Northern and Islands Provinces.

The policy of *rééquilibrage* was explained and justified by Prime Minister Michel Rocard in a public letter addressed to President Mitterrand in October 1988 by reference to the fact that the '*communauté mélanésienne*' was the '*première victime des déséquilibres issus de la colonisation*'.¹⁷ Rocard also affirmed in this connection that the '*communauté mélanésienne peut légitimement faire valoir des droits particuliers en matière foncière et doit pouvoir faire reconnaître pleinement son identité culturelle*'.¹⁸

The most direct means of giving effect to the recognition and 'promotion' of Kanak culture and identity identified as such in the terms of the Matignon Accords was the commitment of the French State to create a public institution called the '*Agence de développement de la culture canaque*', designed to '*permettre l'expression et l'épanouissement sous toutes ses formes de la personnalité mélanésienne*', and to '*assurer l'accès de tous à l'information et à la culture*'.¹⁹ Pursuant to this commitment, the ADCC was created by Article 93 of the *Loi n° 88-1028 du 9 novembre 1988*, '*dans les conditions fixés par décret en conseil d'État*'.²⁰ The *Office calédonien des cultures*

through providing the necessary funding for the ten-year program of *rééquilibrage*. It was also agreed that the French State would exercise direct political control over the Territory (through its official representative in New Caledonia, the High Commissioner) until mid-1989, when the new local institutional structure would be put into place.

¹⁷ Rocard (1988).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ See 'Texte n° 1 : La condition d'une paix durable – l'État impartial et au service de tous', in *Accords de Matignon-Oudinot*. Note that the Accords' incorporation of Kanak 'customary' authorities into New Caledonia's institutional structure and the land reform regime geared towards the return of Kanak 'traditional' lands were also important parts of this cultural recognition and *rééquilibrage*.

²⁰ *Loi n° 88-1028 du 9 novembre 1988 portant dispositions statutaires et préparatoires à l'autodétermination de la Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1998*, article 93.

(OCC) was to be dissolved as of 14 July 1989 (through the repeal of the second Pons Statute on that date)²¹ and the '*biens, droits et obligations*' of that institution were to be transferred to this new Agency.²²

However, there was some delay in giving effect to these provisions,²³ and the requisite legal decree specifying the modality of the creation of the ADCC was only promulgated on the 27 July 1989²⁴ – three months after the assassination of Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Yéweiné Yéweiné. According to Bensa, those responsible for the '*dossier calédonien*' within the State apparatus in Paris appreciably accelerated the implementation of the Matignon Accords subsequent to this tragic event, including in the domain of Kanak cultural promotion.²⁵ Through the July decree, the ADCC was formally instituted as an '*établissement public de l'État à caractère administratif*'.²⁶ However, from a very early stage, the people nominated as members of the ADCC's *Conseil d'administration* and appointed to key positions within the Agency modified the organisation's name by replacing '*canaque*' with '*kanak*', a change which was only given definitive legal force

²¹ Ibid., article 96.

²² Ibid., article 93, article 96.

²³ This delay is acknowledged in Arrêté n° 3204 du 20 octobre 1989 portant dispositions particulières dans le cadre de l'article 18 du décret relatif à l'Agence de Développement de la Culture Canaque, *Journal Officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, 31 October 1989, 2452, <<http://www.juridoc.gouv.nc>>. Olivier Fandos maintains in this connection that, subsequent to the enactment of the *Loi n° 88-1028 du 9 novembre 1988*, '*les priorités gouvernementales sont autres et l'Agence tarde à être organisée*': Fandos (2001: 53).

²⁴ Décret n° 89-524 du 27 juillet 1989 relatif à l'Agence de développement de la culture canaque, *Journal Officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, 8 August 1989, 1689; consolidated version as at 16 August 2010, <<http://www.juridoc.gouv.nc>> ('*Décret n° 89-524 du 27 juillet 1989 relatif à l'Agence de développement de la culture canaque*').

²⁵ Bensa (2000: 30). See also Fandos (2001: 53).

²⁶ See *Décret n° 89-524 du 27 juillet 1989 relatif à l'Agence de développement de la culture canaque*, article 13.

in 1999.²⁷ The July 1989 decree stipulates the missions of the ADCK: '*assurer la mise en valeur et la promotion de la culture kanak*'.²⁸

Marie-Claude Tjibaou and Jacques Iékawé²⁹ were notably designated to the ADCK's *Conseil d'administration* as the representatives of the State on 31 August 1989.³⁰ Marie-Claude Tjibaou was subsequently elected within the *Conseil d'administration* as its President – a post she still holds today. Octave Togna was designated as the ADCK's Director on the 3 November 1989 and would continue in this role until 2006.³¹ Jean-Pierre Deteix also became the ADCK's Secretary-General in 1989, a position he would hold until 2002.³² On Bensa's account, these key appointments were made '*sur proposition des indépendantistes*'.³³

²⁷ Décret n° 99-1024 du 1^{er} décembre 1999 modifiant le décret n° 89-524 du 27 juillet 1989 relatif à l'Agence de développement de la culture canaque, *Journal Officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, 20 July 1999, 3558, <<http://www.juridoc.gouv.nc>>. Article 1 of this 1999 decree provides: '[d]ans l'intitulé et les dispositions du décret du 27 juillet 1989 susvisé, les mots : « canaque » et « canaques » sont remplacés par le mot : « kanak ».' For convenience, I refer to the Agency as the ADCK from this point.

²⁸ Décret n° 89-524 du 27 juillet 1989 relatif à l'Agence de développement de la culture canaque, article 1. Article 1 then provides: '[à] cet effet, l'agence est notamment chargée de valoriser le patrimoine archéologique, ethnologique et linguistique kanak, d'encourager les formes contemporaines d'expression de la culture kanak, en particulier dans les domaines artisanal, audiovisuel et artistique, de promouvoir les échanges culturels, notamment dans la région du Pacifique Sud, ainsi que de définir et de conduire des programmes de recherche.'

²⁹ Iékawé was New Caledonia's Secretary-General at this time.

³⁰ Arrêté n° 2473 du 31 août 1989 portant nomination de représentants de l'État au Conseil d'Administration de l'Agence de Développement de la Culture Canaque, *Journal Officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, 5 September 1989, 2004, <<http://www.juridoc.gouv.nc>>.

³¹ Arrêté du 3 novembre 1989 portant nomination du directeur de l'Agence de développement de la culture canaque, *Journal Officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, 25 November 1989, 14660, <<http://www.juridoc.gouv.nc>>. Togna had previously been engaged in local trade-unions and politics in the 1970s, before serving as an attaché to Jean-Marie Tjibaou's cabinet during his Vice-Presidency from 1982 to 1984 and founding *Radio Djido* – the country's first and only pro-independence Kanak radio station – in 1985. Fandos (2001: 55); Togna (2009: 28). *Radio Djido* began broadcasting on the symbolically charged date of the 24 September.

³² Deteix was a non-Kanak member of the UC who had been designated Secretary-General of the Provisional Government of Kanaky in 1984 and who had been involved in the creation of the key organs of the pro-Kanak independence media in the 1980s – *Radio Djido*, *Bwenando* and the *Agence kanak de presse*. Deteix (2008: 29); Ouverture Citoyenne, 'Portrait : Jean-Pierre Deteix', 29/04/2009, <<http://ouverturecitoyenne.unblog.fr/>>.

³³ Bensa (2000: 31).

The development of the CCT project

The project of constructing a Kanak cultural centre in Noumea (ultimately realised as the CCT) is often attributed directly to Jean-Marie Tjibaou himself. Indeed, Bensa maintains that this was one of Tjibaou's demands during the negotiation of the Matignon Accords.³⁴ However, there is no mention in the terms of the Matignon Accords of any such agreement. Moreover, according to Togna in an interview in 2008, only the construction of the ADCK's headquarters formed part of the political agreement reached, not the construction of a Kanak cultural centre.³⁵

Togna maintains that the ADCK was originally housed in premises on the Nouville peninsula after having refused, despite considerable pressure, to take up residence in the *Ko We Kara* cultural centre so as to avoid any confusion with the *Office calédonien des cultures*.³⁶ Togna identifies this as having been '*une question de principe*',³⁷ for, as noted by Deteix (also in 2008), the OCC:

*visait en réalité à fondre la culture kanak parmi les autres cultures. On ne pouvait pas laisser amalgamer ainsi la culture du peuple premier avec celles qui étaient venues se superposer au fil de la colonisation.*³⁸

Togna retrospectively emphasises the importance of the particular socio-political context within which the ADCK was instituted, at a time when tensions remained high in the immediate wake of the Ouvéa tragedy, for the formulation of the perspective and orientations of that institution (which would in turn inform the development of the CCT project).³⁹ He affirms: '*[q]uand nous avons mis en place l'ADCK, il était clair que l'objectif principal était de réinstaller la culture kanak dans son pays, de lui redonner*

³⁴ Ibid., 29. Bensa maintains that this demand was accepted by Lafleur's RPCR delegation only subsequent to the intervention of the French Minister, Louis Le Pensec: *ibid.*, 7, 29.

³⁵ Togna (2008a: 22).

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Deteix (2008: 29).

³⁹ Togna (2008a: 21-22).

ses lettres de noblesse.⁴⁰ The orientations, discourse and actions of the ADCK during this initial period were firmly inscribed in the political project of Kanak emancipation and decolonisation that had previously been engaged by its members, Tjibaou and others in the Kanak independence movement.⁴¹

On Togna and Deteix's accounts, the project to construct the CCT emerged initially from both the adoption of the project to construct the ADCK's headquarters as one of François Mitterrand's '*Grands Travaux de la République*' in the wake of Tjibaou's assassination,⁴² and the ADCK's decision to make its headquarters a significant tool for the promotion and development of Kanak culture and identity, rather than simply administrative offices or another museum for the display of Kanak tangible heritage and 'historical artefacts'.⁴³

The adoption of this project as one of Mitterrand's *Grands Travaux*, alongside projects such as the construction of the French National Library, the Bastille Opera, and the glass pyramid of the Louvre, gave it considerable national (and international) prominence and prestige. According to the official website of the French Ministry for Culture and Communication, the *Grands Travaux* '*répondaient aux besoins de doter*

⁴⁰ Ibid., 21.

⁴¹ See Togna (2008a). One contemporaneous example of the relatively explicit pro-independence political engagement of key members of the ADCK, including through and in relation to the CCT project, appears in an interview with Marie-Claude Tjibaou published in the very first edition of the ADCK's journal, *Mwà Vée*: Wetta-Tjibaou (1993).

⁴² Bensa refers in this connection to the '*travail de deuil engagé par les hauts fonctionnaires qui avaient eu la chance de travailler avec Jean-Marie Tjibaou ou qui s'étaient sentis solidaires de la parole du Premier ministre Michel Rocard (l'artisan des accords de Matignon)*': Bensa (2000: 30). According to the CCT/ADCK website, it was Rocard who first proposed the adoption of the Centre as one of the *Grands Travaux* to Mitterrand: CCT/ADCK, 'Présentation : L'Agence de développement de la culture kanak : Projet architectural', 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/lagence-de-developpement-de-la-culture-kanak/projet-architectural>>.

⁴³ Deteix (2008: 30); Togna (2008a: 22-24). Fandos maintains that the organisation by the ADCK (in partnership with the Territorial Museum) of the international exhibition '*De jade et de nacre*' highlighted '*le manqué d'une structure d'accueil d'exposition, reserve à l'Agence*', and gave rise to reflection within the ADCK's *Conseil d'administration* regarding an expansion of the project. Fandos (2001: 56).

notre pays des grandes institutions culturelles qui lui faisaient encore défaut.⁴⁴ The website also affirms:

*[i]l s'agissait [...] de répondre à une volonté de démocratisation en rendant largement accessible à tous les français l'ensemble de notre patrimoine artistique, en leur offrant aussi toutes les possibilités d'accompagner les évolutions de la création contemporaine.*⁴⁵

The predominant focus of these presidential projects was thus on the preservation, valorisation and 'démocratisation' of the culture and heritage specific to France. The adoption of the project to construct a Kanak cultural centre in New Caledonia as one of these *Grands Travaux* was consequently unusual – not only was it the first such project to have been constructed outside of Metropolitan France,⁴⁶ it was also the only to have been dedicated to a 'minority' culture within the French nation.⁴⁷

Bensa highlights the politics behind the choice of naming the Centre in honour of Jean-Marie Tjibaou in this connection. On Bensa's account, the initial spontaneous designation of the project as the '*Centre culturel kanak*' '*embarrassait le gouvernement*',⁴⁸ being inconsistent with the rhetoric and, indeed, the organising principles of the French Republic as an indivisible socio-cultural polity and nation-state, as well as being problematic in the context of the diverse composition of New Caledonia's own population.⁴⁹ Bensa maintains that Tjibaou's death provided the Government with a means of sidestepping these problems: '*[L]e glissement de « kanak »*

⁴⁴ Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, 'Les Grands Travaux', <<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/historique/rubriques/grandstravaux.htm>>.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Message (2006a: 15).

⁴⁷ Bensa (2000: 15, 34). Indeed, as noted by Bensa: '*[p]ar ses dimensions et l'hommage appuyé qu'il rend à une culture autochtone, cet édifice n'a aucun équivalent ni en métropole, ni dans les territoires d'outre-mer français*': *ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 34.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

à « Tjibaou » présentait surtout l'avantage d'euphémiser l'entreprise et de libérer le Centre d'une image trop « ethnique ». ⁵⁰

This choice of name also interconnects with the discursive practices and processes through which the figure of Jean-Marie Tjibaou, represented in certain ways and inscribed in specific historical narratives, has been strategically mobilised by different actors in the period since his death.⁵¹ Writing in 1998 in the wake of the CCT's inauguration and opening to the public, Brown presents a critical perspective of the 'posthumous personality cultism for Jean-Marie' in relation to the Centre, a cult Brown considers to be linked to the 'replacement' of the political by the cultural.⁵²

On the other hand, from the perspective of the ADCK in the early 1990s, the 'glissement de « kanak » à « Tjibaou »' in the name of the Centre can be seen to have allowed for the 'euphemisation' of the pro-Kanak independence political inscription of the CCT project – Tjibaou's personal trajectory having been closely linked to that of the pro-independence movement from the second half of the 1970s until his death, and his simultaneous engagement in the Kanak cultural and political *revendication* illustrating and exemplifying their fundamental interconnection.⁵³ Thus, in a 1995 edition of the ADCK/CCT's quarterly cultural journal, *Mwà Vée*,⁵⁴ dedicated to the twentieth

⁵⁰ Ibid., 34-35.

⁵¹ Note that even before his assassination Tjibaou's representation in LNC had changed dramatically subsequent to the finalisation of the Matignon Accords agreement: Chanter (1996: 55). Writing only two months after Tjibaou's death in 1989, Jacques Violette was highly critical of the 'misrepresentation' of Tjibaou by '*une grande partie de la presse*' and some in '*le pouvoir parisien*', '*au bénéfice de leur politique, de leurs ambitions. Ils veulent le récupérer, en faire un pacifiste à tout prix, une colombe, un mouton [...]. Ils finiraient par dire qu'il n'était même pas indépendantiste.*' Violette (1989: 6).

⁵² Brown (1998: 134). This point is discussed further below.

⁵³ Dussy's account of the 'customary' exchanges and negotiations associated with the conferral of this name on the Centre seem to suggest that the ADCK had itself chosen and fully supported it: see Dussy (2003: 9). Moreover, the perception by certain 'customary' authorities in the South aligned politically with the 'loyalist' RPCR that this choice of name signified the pro-independence inscription of the CCT project appears to have caused some problems for the ADCK: *ibid.*, 9-10.

⁵⁴ According to Togna's editorial in the first edition in 1993, 'en langue Drùbéa, [Mwà Vée] signifie "La maison de la Parole" ou "L'enveloppe de la Parole". Nous avons choisi cette belle expression pour donner son nom à la Revue, et pour exprimer en quoi celle-ci correspond à une mission essentielle de l'ADCK : être l'outil qui garde la parole de l'ensemble de la société Kanak avec cette exigence : de partager la parole comme nos anciens ont su si bien le faire, sans blesser personne.' Togna (1993: 4). Since the first

anniversary of *Mélanésie 2000*, Togna's editorial affirms that in organising the 1975 festival:

*Tjibaou savait très bien où il allait : à travers l'affirmation de la dignité de la culture, c'était la première pierre de la revendication politique qui était posée. [...] Culture et politique sont intimement liées. [...] N'étant pas un état souverain, la culture devient un élément qui justifie et appuie notre besoin d'être libre de nos pensées, de notre destin.*⁵⁵

It is within this discursive framework and historical narrative that Togna also situates the meaning and significance of the CCT project in this editorial.

As had been the case for the creation of the ADCK pursuant to the Matignon Accords, the CCT project was generally represented in the New Caledonian context of the early 1990s as a means of symbolising and of giving material form to France's recognition of Kanak culture and identity and their restitution to a primary position in New Caledonia – a politico-cultural *revendication* which had indeed been articulated through the *Mélanésie 2000* project two decades earlier. The CCT project also constituted part of the political program of *rééquilibrage* in favour of the Kanak population engaged pursuant to the Matignon Accords. The political significance of this cultural recognition and restitution in the period following '*les événements*' was especially acute given the cultural policies which had been engaged previously in New Caledonia, particularly following the return of the right-wing to power in the national parliament in 1986.⁵⁶

edition, the CCT has been a major preoccupation of the ADCK's journal. The reason for this in the period prior to its inauguration is also suggested by Togna in the first edition's editorial: 'nous souhaitons vous [jeunes et vieux Kanak] associer à la conception et à la réalisation du grand projet du Centre Culturel Jean-Marie TJIBAOU : il s'annonce comme l'aboutissement d'une large réflexion commencée avec *Mélanésie 2000*, pour engendrer l'identité Kanak de l'an 2000. Il s'agit de gérer la modernité permettant aux Kanak d'être eux-mêmes, comme le disait Jean-Marie TJIBAOU, il s'agit d'inscrire la tribu dans la ville, le traditionnel dans le monde urbain': *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Togna (1995).

⁵⁶ See the discussion in Annex 4.

Nevertheless, as affirmed by Pierre Laulanne in a study completed in 1993 for the ADCK, in the early 1990s '*la culture kanak [faisait] toujours problème.*'⁵⁷ Laulanne explains:

[r]econnaître publiquement la culture kanak comme la culture indigène de Nouvelle-Calédonie, c'est quelque part reconnaître le fondement de la légitimité de la revendication kanak [d'indépendance]. C'est de toute façon reconnaître l'histoire d'une colonisation.⁵⁸

Bensa similarly emphasises the 'subversive' aspect of the project of constructing '*un signe imposant de la présence kanak*' such as the CCT in New Caledonia's capital city,⁵⁹ particularly given the 'loyalist' political control of and non-Kanak demographic predominance in Noumea and the Southern Province.⁶⁰

The site ultimately chosen for the construction of the CCT on the Tina Peninsula is generally identified as being the same as *Mélanésie 2000*'s main-festival site. This is not, however, strictly accurate, *Mélanésie 2000* having taken place on land adjacent to the CCT site.⁶¹ The prevalent discursive conflation of the two sites is consequently characterised by Brown as the result of 'convenient memory slips and wishful telescoping in an act of the cultural politics of continuity'.⁶² Nevertheless, the symbolism of and *revendication* inherent to the location of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival on the outskirts of the capital city, '*Nouméa la blanche*', has still been carried through to and given material permanence by the CCT. Thus, as stated in one *Mwà Vée* article published in 1996, the CCT is '*un acte politique : il s'inscrit dans la cité.*'⁶³ In

⁵⁷ Laulanne (1993: 187).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Bensa (2002: 190). This also resonates strongly with the *Mélanésie 2000* project.

⁶⁰ Bensa (2000: 31). Laulanne also highlights the importance of locating the CCT in Noumea as the '*lieu de la cohabitation des différents systèmes culturels dans lesquels de toute façon les kanak baignent maintenant.*' Laulanne (1993: 188).

⁶¹ The *Mélanésie 2000* site is identified by Brown as the area now housing the 'private enclave of Tina [...] for the new rich of Noumea in their Queensland-style houses on the hill, and the exclusive Tina golf course, the village's backyard.' Brown (1998: 125).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Retière (1996: 51).

this manner, the CCT can be seen to represent an affirmation and enactment of the Kanak people's '*droit de cité*', invoking the notion of the '*polis*' of ancient Greece and the fundamental political rights attaching to citizenship.

According to Fandos, the ADCK chose this specific site in Noumea by reason of the link to the *Mélanésie 2000* festival.⁶⁴ However, Deteix has subsequently identified the geographical location of the Centre on the Tina Peninsula as having been imposed on the ADCK '*par ceux qui voulaient nous cacher en nous reléguant le plus loin possible de la ville.*'⁶⁵ The legal owner of the Tina site was the RPCR-dominated Municipality of Noumea, which, according to Bensa, only agreed to cede the land to the ADCK by reason of political pressure exerted by Rocard's Government.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, this legal transfer of land had particular significance in light of the historical context of Kanak alienation from the lands in the Noumea area, which was appropriated in its entirety by France in 1856⁶⁷ and which has generally remained legally exempt from possible Kanak land-rights claims.⁶⁸ Bensa consequently identifies this transfer to the ADCK as highly significant by reason of its constituting '*le premier retour d'une terre kanak de la région de Nouméa à ses plus anciens propriétaires.*'⁶⁹

Nevertheless, this free cession of land in the Noumea area to the ADCK and the construction of the CCT thereon did not constitute a fundamental challenge to the established socio-political order and status quo then persisting in the country. Not only was the land in question relatively peripheral to the city centre, the CCT was an official, French State sanctioned and sponsored project, discursively inscribed in the framework of Matignon Accords agreement and its *rééquilibrage* process, as well as in the framework of President Mitterrand's prestigious national *Grands Travaux de la*

⁶⁴ Fandos (2001: 56).

⁶⁵ Deteix (2008: 35). Deteix also portrays as '*étonnant*' the fact that the French State did not attribute one of its own numerous parcels of land in the city to the ADCK for the CCT.

⁶⁶ Bensa (2000: 33).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Dussy (2003: 3). See also the discussion in Annex 1.

⁶⁹ Bensa (2000: 33); and see *ibid.*, 155.

République. This allowed for the accommodation of the CCT project by local anti-independence politicians, despite their initial resistance⁷⁰ and some potential persisting reticence.⁷¹

However, the principal politico-institutional interlocutor of the ADCK in relation to the CCT project during the period of its formulation and realisation in the 1990s was the French State, rather than the local 'loyalist'-dominated political institutions such as the Southern Province and the Municipality of Noumea, the '*politiques culturelles*' of which '*tournent autour de l'idée de "pluriethnique"*',⁷² largely at odds with the politics of Kanak culture and identity embodied and engaged in and through the CCT.⁷³ The significant implication of the French State in the CCT project was itself driven by a range of specifically 'national' interests, beyond those immediately at play in the early Matignon Accords context of New Caledonia. France's nuclear testing in the Pacific, its actions in the Rainbow Warrior affair in 1985, and its policies regarding the Kanak independence struggle in the 1980s had led to a significantly hostile regional environment, in which France's continuing presence in the Pacific was strongly questioned and criticised internationally, including particularly by the dominant Anglophone countries in the region, Australia and New Zealand.⁷⁴ The signing of the Matignon Accords in 1988 and the declaration by Mitterrand in 1991 that France would end its nuclear testing program significantly ameliorated this situation.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ In his 2008 account of the CCT project's realisation, Togna maintains that in the early 1990s, '[n]os rapports avec les institutions locales étaient difficiles.' Togna (2008a: 23).

⁷¹ See the discussion below.

⁷² Laulanne (1993: 187). Laulanne maintains that these institutions: '*font du "multiculturel" : c'est-à-dire une culture qui n'est ni kanak, ni wallisienne ni futunienne, ni vietnamienne mais l'expression d'une culture calédonienne de demain. C'est l'idéologie du "tous ensemble"*'.

⁷³ Indeed, as highlighted by Tjibaou in an interview in January 1989, the majority of 'loyalists' in New Caledonia voted against the Matignon Accords in the November 1988 referendum. While Tjibaou cites this as proof that the 'loyalist' position had remained largely unchanged at this early stage in the Matignon Accords process, he does acknowledge some potential 'progress' and change in the position and engagement of the French Government. See Tjibaou (1996: 298).

⁷⁴ Fandos (2001: 63-65).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

The project to construct the CCT can be seen to have constituted a strategic engagement in the domain of ‘culture’ which formed an important part of France’s attempt to legitimise and bolster its position, image and continued presence in New Caledonia and the Pacific region.⁷⁶ An interrelated aspect of French policy in the 1990s (and subsequently) has been the encouragement and facilitation of New Caledonia’s increasing insertion into the Pacific region, and the positioning of New Caledonia as a significant regional player and leader. According to Fandos, the CCT project was reoriented so as to have a greater emphasis on and engagement with the Pacific region (in addition to a greater accent on tourism) subsequent to the ‘*mission d’évaluation du dossier du CCT*’ initiated by the French Government following to the return of ‘*la droite française*’ to power in 1993.⁷⁷ Fandos maintains that this reorientation was driven by the (re)conception of the CCT project by the Government as more than ‘*un symbole du rééquilibrage et de l’ouverture politique en direction des kanak*’ – the CCT was now also conceived as ‘*un outil permettant, à travers la culture, de renouer des liens privilégiés de partenariat commercial avec les pays du Pacifique*’.⁷⁸

However, the CCT project was not exclusively defined by the exigencies and interests of the French State. The designated ‘*maître d’ouvrage*’ of the project was the ADCK itself, which was also (and still remains) primarily responsible for the formulation of the Centre’s content, functions and continued animation. The incorporation of a greater Pacific (and, indeed, international) emphasis in the CCT project was not simply imposed by France on the ADCK,⁷⁹ and cannot be seen to exclusively serve France’s interests. As discussed in Annex 4, the affirmation of geographical, historical and

⁷⁶ Message notes that the CCT ‘might confirm Claude Patriat’s argument that “out of all democratic countries, the French nation has taken furthest the assertion of an active political presence in the cultural field” as a way to ensure its authority.’ Message (2006(a): 18). Reference is to Claude Patriat in Jim McGuigan, 2004, *Rethinking Cultural Policy (issues in Cultural and Media Studies)*, Berkshire, England, Open University Press, 66.

⁷⁷ Fandos (2001: 68).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Note that one of the ADCK’s own missions, determined during the negotiation of the Matignon Accords, is to promote ‘*les échanges culturels, notamment dans la région du Pacifique Sud*’: Décret n° 89-524 du 27 juillet 1989 relatif à l’Agence de développement de la culture canaque, article 1.

cultural links with the indigenous peoples and countries of the Pacific has significant political implications in the context of the Kanak people's struggle for decolonisation and independence, and has frequently been mobilised strategically by the Kanak independence movement to reinforce its political position and claims.

This is illustrated in the 1990s context prior to the CCT's inauguration in comments made by ADCK representatives implicitly indicating the Kanak nationalist inscription of the CCT project's Pacific orientation and the county's involvement in the Festival of Pacific Arts, as well as Paul Néaoutyine's framing of the 1993 *Fête des peuples indigènes*. After the period of '*les événements*', the New Caledonian delegation to the Festival of Pacific Arts recovered its indigenous, Kanak focus (with the associated political implications) in 1992, when the ADCK organised and led the delegation to the sixth edition of the Festival hosted by the Cook Islands.⁸⁰ One year later, Marie-Claude Tjibaou clearly affirmed in the first edition of *Mwà Vée* the Kanak orientation, objectives and agency of the CCT, including in relation to the broader Pacific.⁸¹ She affirmed that the Centre '*est d'abord un outil pour les Kanak, pour se ressourcer, se sentir bien*', and continued:

[c]'*est dans la ville blanche, mais on a besoin de montrer aux autres qu'on est Kanak. C'est l'histoire de tout le monde [Kanak], la liaison entre le passé et l'avenir. Notre maison est celle du Pacifique, avec tous les frères et sœurs issus de la même racine, pour l'exercice de l'accueil des autres. Pour que ce ne soit pas l'Etat, mais nous qui accueillons.*'⁸²

The theme of Kanak *accueil* of foreigners at the 'national', New Caledonian level (and its political implications) can thus also be seen to have informed the CCT project as it was elaborated and engaged by its Kanak proponents.

⁸⁰ Note that the mini-festival organised in Noumea (on the grounds of the ADCK at Nouville) in preparation for the 1992 event was represented by its organisers as being in continuity with *Mélanésie 2000*. C.D.C., 'DE NOUMÉA AUX ILES COOK – Wet et Galilée iront aux [sic] Festival des Arts du Pacifique', *Tour de Côte*, no. 20, July 1992, 31.

⁸¹ Wetta-Tjibaou (1993).

⁸² *Ibid.*, 49.

This theme was also central to the *Fête des peuples indigènes* organised to mark both the 140th anniversary of New Caledonia's '*prise de possession*' by France and the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples in 1993, at the half-way point of the Matignon Accords. Representatives of a number of Pacific countries, other indigenous peoples and, indeed, of the French State were invited and welcomed 'customarily' by 'the Kanak people' to this event.⁸³ In his opening address, Paul Néaoutyine (Mayor of Poindimié and then FLNKS President) constructed the socio-political significance of the event in terms of the exercise of the Kanak people's '*droit d'accueil*' in its own lands as the country's indigenous people, foreshadowing the projected full restitution of Kanak sovereignty in the future independent nation of Kanaky that he urged his Kanak audience to continue to work towards.⁸⁴

In 1996, the ADCK again organised and led an exclusively Kanak New Caledonian delegation to the seventh Festival of Pacific Arts held in 1996 in Samoa. At the conclusion of the event, New Caledonia (represented by Marie-Claude Tjibaou as the head of the delegation) was given the flag of the Festival as the host of its next edition in 2000. Marie-Claude Tjibaou was quoted by LNC as having constructed the significance of New Caledonia's hosting this Festival in 2000 as follows:

[o]n ne peut pas séparer la politique de la culture. Je mesure que les quatre prochaines années seront d'une importance capitale pour notre pays. Nous avons signé les accords de Matignon. Et 1998, c'est pour bientôt. La France sortirait encore plus grande si, sincèrement, elle nous aidait à accéder à l'indépendance, si elle faisait une décolonisation réussie. En restant un pays colonisé, on est à contresens de l'histoire. On nous dit que les pays indépendants sont malheureux. C'est faux. Il n'y a qu'à prendre l'exemple des Samoa occidentales, indépendants depuis

⁸³ See 'Poindimié a fêté l'année des peuples indigènes', *Tour de Côte*, no. 34, November 1993, 6-7; Paul Néaoutyine : "Sous le signe du renouveau et du partage", *Tour de Côte*, no. 34, November 1993, 8-11.

⁸⁴ See 'Paul Néaoutyine : "Sous le signe du renouveau et du partage"', *Tour de Côte*, no. 34, November 1993, 8-11.

1962. *Quand je vois la façon dont les gens s'expriment, chantent, dansent, j'ai envie d'être de ces peuples-là.*⁸⁵

The pro-Kanak independence perspective and engagement of Marie-Claude Tjibaou at this time and the associated political significance of Kanak and New Caledonian engagement with and welcome of the (predominantly politically independent) peoples and countries of the Pacific is readily apparent.

The CCT's second '*saison de préfiguration*' organised by the ADCK for 1996 was itself themed around Kanak cultural links to and engagement with the Pacific.⁸⁶ Construction of the CCT was well underway by this time, and the inauguration was programmed for 1997. The final design of the CCT and its content also incorporated a particular Pacific emphasis and engagement. The above discussion of the politics of the Pacific orientation and focus of various Kanak engagements in 'cultural' events during the 1990s can be seen to illustrate (and extend) the '*paradoxe*' identified by Bensa as having permeated '*l'ensemble*' of the CCT project from the outset:

*[s]ituée à la confluence de deux volontés politiques, celle de l'État français souhaitant confirmer son autorité sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie [and its presence in the Pacific], celle des indépendantistes kanak aspirant à un changement de souveraineté en leur faveur, la conception même du Centre s'est trouvée prise entre ces deux exigences.*⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Sylvie Gesquière, 'QUESTIONS A... Marie-Claude Tjibaou', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/1996, 92. In another article, Marie-Claude Tjibaou was also quoted as stating that to host the Festival in 2000 in New Caledonia is, '[p]ar rapport à l'évolution politique de notre pays, [...] quelque part un atout important, une continuité avec tous les peuples du Pacifique': O Béligon, 'La délégation calédonienne est rentrée du festival des Arts du Pacifique: "De retour d'un grand jardin..."', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/1996, 12.

⁸⁶ The orientations and objectives of this *saison de préfiguration* were represented in *Mwà Vée* in the following terms: '[I]e Pacifique, région culturelle. S'ouvrir sur le Pacifique. Ce sont les idées force de la saison que nous vous proposons [...]. Cette ouverture vers le Pacifique se lit comme un enrichissement du patrimoine culturel kanak pour s'affirmer sur notre sol, au sein de la région, mais aussi pour s'enrichir auprès de cultures sœurs.' Collectif ADCK, '1995... 1996... En route vers l'ouverture', *Mwà Vée*, no. 12, March-April 1996, 67.

⁸⁷ Bensa (2000: 39). See also Message (2006a: 16).

Bensa contends that the Centre's architecture was alone able to subvert these two opposing exigencies, '*sans y céder*.'⁸⁸

The Renzo Piano Building Workshop was designated as the '*maître d'œuvre*' of the CCT project after having won the international architectural competition for its design, held in 1990 and 1991 within the framework of the project's inscription as a *Grand Travail*. The CCT's final architectural form and its physical occupation of the site was thus developed by the internationally acclaimed Italian architect Renzo Piano and his team, within the parameters initially set by the ADCK and subsequently refined in close collaboration with that institution. Bensa, a French anthropologist and New Caledonian 'specialist', was himself directly implicated in the elaboration of the CCT project, having worked as a consultant for the Renzo Piano Building Workshop from the outset.⁸⁹ Bensa maintains of Piano's project for the CCT:

[à] la jonction de l'architecture mondiale contemporaine et d'une inspiration mélanésienne millénaire, son dessin fait la part de l'emprise européenne sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie et de la résistance que les Kanak y opposent.⁹⁰

However, significant tensions permeate the political implication of CCT as an architectural and museological project.

⁸⁸ Bensa (2000: 39).

⁸⁹ Bensa (2000: 7); Brown (2002); Message (2006a: 14).

⁹⁰ Bensa (2000: 39).

Tensions in the CCT's final conceptualisation and form

The CCT as a Kanak nationalist project – '*la tribu dans la ville*', or '*l'ambassadeur de la culture Kanak*' and '*moteur*' of its creative development?

As one of the *Grands Travaux*, entirely funded by the French State,⁹¹ the character, functions and architecture of the Centre were conceived in a manner and a register that was entirely unique in the context of 1990s New Caledonia, allowing for the realisation of a predominantly Western-style cultural facility and 'new museum' on a large scale, with cutting-edge technology, a substantial functional scope and 'world-class' modern architecture.

As discussed in Annex 4, Jean-Marie Tjibaou had advocated for the construction of a Kanak cultural centre in Noumea as a means of allowing for the inscription of '*la tribu dans la ville*'⁹² – the adaptation of the urban environment and the organisation of the city in reference to the Kanak 'way of life'. Such a centre could thus function as a place in the city for Kanak 'customary' ceremonies and 'traditional' activities and practices.⁹³ However, this was not the path ultimately chosen by the ADCK for the CCT. As stated by Deteix in 2008:

si on voulait donner une place significative à la culture kanak dans ce pays et par rapport à l'extérieur, il lui fallait un lieu qui marque. C'est la raison pour laquelle il ne faut pas vouloir lui faire jouer tous les rôles à la fois, celui de la culture domestique [...], en accueillant les mariages

⁹¹ The initial budget was set in 1992 at 320 million French Francs. However, the final cost of the project upon completion was 356 million FF. See 'Coût du CCT', in Fandos (2001: Annex 6, 137).

⁹² Togna (1993: 4).

⁹³ See also Tjibaou (1996: 157-158, 283); Guiart (1996: 109-110). This conception also corresponded to the expectations of many Kanak people (both in '*la brousse*' and in urban Noumea) in relation to the CCT project, who affirmed '*[i]l faut qu'on se sente comme dans une tribu*': Bensa (1992: 9); and see more generally Bensa (1992); Bensa (2000: 111-118).

*coutumiers par exemple, et celui d'ambassadeur de la culture kanak. Il faut que le Centre reste un lieu de référence de la culture de cette terre.*⁹⁴

This perspective can, however, also be seen to resonate with Tjibaou's perspective regarding the Kanak cultural *revendication* and its necessary interconnection to the *revendication* of decolonisation and Kanak independence.⁹⁵

Rather than (re)presenting Kanak culture and identity in the CCT through the display of 'traditional' objects or 'artefacts' (as in New Caledonia's Territorial Museum), the ADCK decided to orient the CCT principally towards contemporary Kanak cultural and artistic creation, drawing again on Tjibaou's philosophy regarding the necessity for the Kanak people to '*utiliser les moyens contemporains [...], intégrer les apports des autres cultures pour affirmer leur propre personnalité.*'⁹⁶ As noted previously, Kanak identity was conceived by Tjibaou as dynamic and as linked to historical context: '*[L]e retour à la tradition, c'est un mythe [...]. Notre identité, elle est devant nous.*'⁹⁷ In this perspective, the CCT was conceived as a means for the Kanak people to '*se créer un environnement culturel où la modernité soit intégrer dans le souffle venu des ancêtres et sans lequel il ne peut y avoir de ressourcement.*'⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Deteix (2008: 36).

⁹⁵ For example, in an interview in March 1984 Tjibaou affirmed: '*[c]e monde « moderne », que nous n'avons pas encore exorcisé, continue à porter la marque d'une colonisation qui nous diminue, qui nous châtie. La persistance de l'amnésie organisée de la réalité kanak, le refus de la reconnaissance des métissages, la négation des vestiges le montrent bien. Le système colonial a fait des Kanaks des anonymes. Nous ne sommes pas devenus marginaux par hasard, ou par simple refus passif. Si je peux aujourd'hui partager avec un non-Kanak de ce pays ce que je possède de culture française, il lui est impossible de partager avec moi la part d'universel contenue dans ma culture. La conciliation de la ville et du milieu rural passe donc par la reconnaissance de la personnalité mélanésienne et la restauration complète de nos valeurs.*' Tjibaou (1996: 158-159).

⁹⁶ Ibid., 159-160.

⁹⁷ Original emphasis, *ibid.*, 185.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 155-156. Togna thus noted in 2008: '*[u]ne agence culturelle n'est en effet pas un outil en usage dans la société kanak. C'est même un non-sens, tout comme l'est un centre culturel pour une structure traditionnelle qui n'a pas besoin de « mettre la parole dans une boîte ». Mais la nécessité de protéger notre patrimoine impliquait précisément de « mettre la parole dans une boîte », autrement dit de nous placer dans une vision qui n'était pas kanak, une vision organisée de la culture.*' Togna (2008a: 23). However, as noted in the Introduction, the institutionalisation of 'Kanak culture' and its representation, reification and strategic mobilisation for various audiences and purposes in and by the CCT and the ADCK (as in various other contexts) has produced considerable contestation and malaise within the

This approach was also informed by and implicated in the politics of decolonisation and the *revendication* of independence.⁹⁹ Tjibaou's project for the promotion of Kanak nationalism via Kanak culture and identity finds particular resonance with many statements on the CCT/ADCK website.¹⁰⁰ However, as discussed below in relation to the coverage of the CCT's inauguration in the local written press, the specifically Kanak nationalist orientation implicit in these statements risks being occluded, neutralised and/or transformed in the contemporary discursive context of the New Caledonian public sphere framed predominantly by the Noumea Accord.

The representation of Kanak culture and identity as dynamic and open to the future in the Piano design

Through the involvement and mediation of Bensa and the ADCK in the design process, Tjibaou's dynamic approach to Kanak culture and identity and its attempted deconstruction and transcendence of the 'tradition'/'modernity' dichotomy (linked to the Kanak project for decolonisation) was itself incorporated into the very contemporary architectural conceptualisation, form and representation of Kanak culture in the CCT's principal building. This building is formed by a series of ten prominent, stylised Kanak

Kanak community itself, for which Kanak 'culture' is often conceived and experienced simply as an integral part of everyday Kanak life, especially life '*en tribu*'. These issues are discussed further below.

⁹⁹ As stated by Tjibaou in September 1988: '*notre objectif d'indépendance kanak socialiste c'est d'affirmer ce que nous sommes sur le plan culturel. Il ne s'agit pas de rejeter les autres, mais de rayonner et d'avoir une sagesse à partager. Dans cette perspective, il faut créer culturellement. [...] Je crois qu'on a toujours une conception trop archéologique de la culture ; serait culture authentique ce qui est du passé ; par contre, tout ce qui est création contemporaine est perçu comme ce qui doit être authentifié, peut-être par le temps. La présence des Kanaks sur le plan culturel aujourd'hui dépend de leur capacité à produire. [...] Il faut promouvoir notre nationalisme à partir de la culture, pour affirmer l'identité kanak, l'identité du pays.*' Tjibaou (1996: 295-296).

¹⁰⁰ For example, the website represents the CCT as a '*[lieu d']identification de la culture kanak et de son pays : il affirme l'identité kanak comme référence, tant pour la société kanak que pour l'ensemble des communautés du pays*'. Note also the representation of the CCT as a '*[lieu d']image "moteur" d'un pays : par la qualité de son architecture et de ses actions, il est l'image symbolique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, son emblème de rayonnement international.*' CCT/ADCK, 'Présentation : L'Agence de développement de la culture kanak : Projet architectural', 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/lagence-de-developpement-de-la-culture-kanak/projet-architectural>>.

'cases' of varying sizes, grouped into three 'villages', each with specific functions.¹⁰¹

The website identifies the CCT's architecture as:

*le résultat d'une prise en compte des formes architecturales kanak et de leur transfiguration dans une architecture moderne. Les « cases » inspirées de l'architecture kanak traditionnelle [...] donnent un aspect inachevé qui rappelle que la culture kanak est toujours en devenir.*¹⁰²

The most prominent material used for the construction of Piano's 'cases' is imported iroko wood, chosen for its resistance to rot and steely gray patina when weathered.¹⁰³

The 'unfinished' external appearance of the 'cases' is achieved through their half-formed shape (perhaps more reminiscent of a shield than of a 'traditional' case, as noted by various authors), the illusion of the absence of any enclosing roof and the visibility

¹⁰¹ In the English brochure freely available at Centre, 'Village 1' is designated under the heading 'Kanak Identity, Kanak & South Pacific Art Collections, Reception Hall'; 'Village 2' under 'Library, Contemporary Art'; and 'Village 3' under 'Remembrance, Lectures, Meetings'. The ten 'cases' are organised along one side of a central, enclosed walkway that follows the gentle arc formed naturally by the crest of the peninsula on which the Centre has been constructed. The walkway links the ten 'cases' and the lower, more externally discrete rooms and spaces of the Centre organised along its opposite side. The walkway is identified on the CCT/ADCK website as evoking '*l'allée centrale spécifique à l'habitat traditionnel kanak*': CCT/ADCK, 'Présentation : Le Centre Culturel Tjibaou : Architecture', 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/le-centre-culturel-tjibaou/architecture>>.

¹⁰² CCT/ADCK, 'Présentation : Le Centre Culturel Tjibaou : Architecture', 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/le-centre-culturel-tjibaou/architecture>>. The website goes on to quote directly from Piano's *Carnet de travail*: '[j]'ai compris que l'un des caractères fondamentaux de l'architecture kanak est le chantier : le « faire » est aussi important que le « fini ». J'ai pensé, dès lors, développer l'idée de chantier permanent, ou plutôt d'un lieu ayant l'apparence d'un chantier « non fini ».' This perspective also resonates with the importance of Kanak immaterial cultural heritage (past-present-future) transmitted by and embodied in '*la parole*' – the oral tradition of Kanak societies. '*La parole*' is also symbolically incorporated into the building through the use of the prevailing natural winds in a high-tech, eco-friendly ventilation system, as well as through the soft hum caused by the passage of those winds through the structure of the 'cases'. Jolly (2001: 432); Brown (2002: 283). In addition to the 'traditional' social importance and function of the collective construction of Kanak cases, Piano's perspective also acknowledges the relative impermanence of such 'traditional' buildings stemming from the natural materials used for their construction, and the resulting need for their sustained use and perpetual maintenance and renewal.

¹⁰³ The CCT/ADCK website also affirms in this connection that '*[l]es cases conjuguent les techniques du futur, tel le lamellé-collé, avec les matériaux traditionnels*': original emphasis, CCT/ADCK, 'Présentation : Le Centre Culturel Tjibaou : Architecture', 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/le-centre-culturel-tjibaou/architecture>>.

through the external wooden ribs of the internal structure of stainless steel supports and engineering.¹⁰⁴

Bensa maintains that, starting from a conception of cultural practices, products and heritage as '*matrices d'autres formes à découvrir*'¹⁰⁵ (in line with Tjibaou's dynamic understanding of culture and identity), Piano and his team engaged in an '*exploration des possibilités contenues dans la culture kanak [...] sans jamais se laisser contraindre à reproduire un « modèle »*'.¹⁰⁶ Message highlights Bensa's own agency in this regard, affirming that in his collaboration with the Piano team Bensa advocated a

forward-looking ideology that avoided the depiction – and definition – of Kanaks in relation to past images only, where they can have no current agency, political or otherwise.¹⁰⁷

The problematic posed by the design of the CCT was indeed characterised subsequently by Bensa in terms of

*le dilemme des rapports à nouer avec le passé. À trop faire allégeance à l'autorité des ancêtres, le concepteur se condamne au clonage tandis que balayer leur présence équivaudrait à nier les sources d'une identité.*¹⁰⁸

On his final assessment, Bensa maintains that Piano's CCT design is successful in 'defending' '*le principe d'une réactivation du passé dans le présent*', consequently striking the necessary balance between representational closure and openness.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ As stated by Brown, Piano translated the idea of 'open-endedness' into the building by 'making transparency and lightness a pervasive feature of the work, via good use of glass and tapering of the wooden columns comprising the external structure of the huts.' Brown (1998: 133)

¹⁰⁵ Bensa (2000: 154).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. In this connection, see also Piano's comments quoted in Philippe Frédière, 'Renzo Piano redécouvre sa « creature »', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 03/05/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

¹⁰⁷ Message (2006a: 14).

¹⁰⁸ Bensa (2000: 162).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 162-163.

The politics of past, present and future in the articulation of indigenous nationalist projects

The tensions identified by Bensa as inherent to Piano's architectural project in designing the CCT can themselves be seen to correlate to and interconnect with tensions inherent to indigenous nationalist projects in contemporary colonial/post-colonial contexts more globally. Margaret Jolly refers in this connection to the 'Janus face between modernist transformations and archaist reaffirmations', identified by authors such as Deniz Kandiyoti in relation to 'the contradictory character of nation-state formation in postcolonial societies.'¹¹⁰ Jolly maintains that, '[i]n the colonial context, this tension between modernist projects in the name of freedom, democracy or development and nationalist recuperation in the name of earlier or original traditions' is especially profound and contested:¹¹¹

[n]ationalism in postcolonial societies has to negotiate the Western origin of Enlightenment and progressionist values – the promise of enfranchisement, emancipation and more recently 'development'. But at the same time, nationalist political elites have to establish their credentials as anti-colonial and anti-Western, by denying the cultural hegemony of the West and by legitimations based on claims of authentic cultural difference and past identities.¹¹²

This is rendered yet more problematic 'in the postmodern age of multiple identities', in which, as noted by Brown, 'the search to promote a particular cultural or ethnic identity seems to be a utopian if not regressive gesture, when it is not simply rhetorical and tactical.'¹¹³ However, the perspective opened by Tjibaou's attempted foundation of the Kanak nationalist project on a dynamic conception of Kanak cultural identity aims to work in a space beyond the dichotomous opposition of 'tradition' and 'modernity',

¹¹⁰ Jolly (1997: 133).

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² References omitted, *ibid.*, 133-134.

¹¹³ Brown (1998: 136).

‘colonised’ and ‘coloniser’. The philosophy and approach articulated by Tjibaou, subsequently appropriated in relation to and broadly expressed through the CCT project, aims to trace what James Clifford refers to as ‘a jagged path between the seductions of a premature, postmodern pluralism and the dangerous comforts offered by exclusivist self–other definitions.’¹¹⁴

The political implications of the CCT as an exemplary expression of ‘new museums’ and ‘modernist’, ‘humanist’ architecture, combined with the ‘democratisation’ of the ‘traditional’ Kanak case in Piano’s design

The articulation of Tjibaou’s perspective on Kanak culture and identity in the CCT has also been identified as an exemplary expression of the international genres of the ‘new museum’ and contemporary Western/international ‘modernist’ and ‘humanist’ architecture. Despite the link to Tjibaou’s philosophy and the strong implication of the ADCK in the choices made regarding the CCT’s form, orientations and content, authors such as Brown and Message have questioned the political implications of the Centre’s exemplification of these international genres, particularly in the context of a building commissioned and funded by the French State.¹¹⁵ As discussed in Annex 5, these authors highlight the French nationalist agenda potentially advanced through the CCT project as a result, which can be seen to persist alongside and in tension with a Kanak

¹¹⁴ Clifford (2001: 470). Indeed, the CCT might be seen to represent an ‘articulated site of indigeneity’ in Clifford’s terms. The notion of ‘articulation’ questions both, on the one hand, ‘the assumption that indigeneity is essentially about primordial, transhistorical attachments’, which ‘tend to bypass the pragmatic, entangled, contemporary forms of indigenous cultural politics’, and, on the other, the equally reductive understanding of indigenous ‘claims as the result of a post-sixties, “postmodern” identity politics (appeals to ethnicity and “heritage” by fragmented groups functioning as “invented traditions” within a late-capitalist, commodified multiculturalism)’, a perspective which ‘brushes aside long histories of indigenous survival and resistance, transformative links with roots prior to and outside the world system.’ Clifford maintains that it is necessary to ‘firmly reject these simplistic explanations – while weighing the partial truth each one contains.’ Clifford (2001: 472). The concept of ‘articulation’ consequently does not conceive phenomena in their complex and highly diverse socio-historical contexts as ‘inauthentic or “merely” political, invented, or opportunistic.’ Rather, articulation ‘evokes a deeper sense of the “political”—productive processes of consensus, exclusion, alliance, and antagonism that are inherent in the transformative life of all societies’: *ibid.*, 473.

¹¹⁵ Brown (2002: 282-283); Message (2006a: 17-18).

nationalist agenda. Particularly significant in both of these regards is the way in which the form and politics of space in the Centre's contemporary architecture appropriates and fundamentally reconfigures the form and politics of the 'traditional' Kanak architecture of the *case*, identified by Bensa as its 'democratisation'.¹¹⁶

However, the CCT is not exclusively constituted by the contemporary Piano building, the design of which attempts to realise a 'symbiosis' with the surrounding natural environment of the site.¹¹⁷ More than this architectural intention to blur the lines between 'inside' and 'outside', the 'man-made' and the 'natural' environment, the CCT site incorporates two important spaces or elements in addition to the Piano building through which the Centre can be seen to (re)present Kanak culture and identity,¹¹⁸ as well as providing further means of accommodating and realising the Centre's various functions and missions. In consequence, the politics of form and space identifiable in the Centre as a whole is considerably more heterogeneous and complex than the consideration of the principal Piano building might initially suggest.

The two additional spaces/elements of the CCT that can be broadly physically and conceptually distinguished from Piano's contemporary building (and associated facilities) are: the '*chemin kanak*' and botanical garden which encircles part of the main contemporary building; and the '*aire coutumière*', or '*Mwakaa*', located to one side of and slightly down-hill from the main contemporary building. Each of these three key spaces/elements has multiple specific functions at both a symbolic and a practical level.

¹¹⁶ Bensa (2000: 76-79). See also Brown (2002: 283). This is discussed further in Annex 5.

¹¹⁷ This is identified on the CCT/ADCK website as stemming from Piano's appreciation of the fact that, '[p]our l'homme kanak, étroitement lié à son environnement naturel, **la terre et les plantes rythment le cours de la vie.**' CCT/ADCK, 'Présentation : Le Centre Culturel Tjibaou : Architecture', 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/le-centre-culturel-tjibaou/architecture>>.

¹¹⁸ The three major spaces/elements of the CCT can be identified as attempting to express, physically and spatially, in a built, landscaped and/or planted environment, the cultural specificity and identity of 'the Kanak people', conceived and constituted as a whole. However, they can all also be seen to represent, construct and engage in various ways with Kanak diversity as well as Kanak unity, so that a persisting tension remains apparent between the two. Thus, as noted by Bensa, the CCT project presented the (Kanak) personnel of the ADCK with both the opportunity to and the difficulties associated with the 'translation' of 'the Kanak people' into architecture – '*la mise en architecture de leur peuple*'. Bensa (2002: 190).

They all also interrelate in various physical, functional and conceptual ways with one another and with the Centre conceived as a whole.

In their expression of Kanak culture and identity, these three spaces/elements can also be seen to construct particular relationships – with both continuities and discontinuities – between the past, the present and the future of that culture and identity. While the dialogue and tension between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ characterise all three spaces/elements, the Piano building is often broadly identified as primarily representing ‘modernity’, with the *chemin kanak* and the *aire coutumière* linking and grounding this to and in ‘tradition’ (although ‘tradition’ itself is conceived as existing in the present, rather than being identified exclusively with the past).¹¹⁹

The *chemin kanak* – representing Kanak indigeneity

The need to ‘anchor’ the CCT in Kanak ‘tradition’, society and culture is apparent in Togna’s 2008 explanation of the initial idea behind the CCT’s *chemin kanak*, beyond Piano’s broad plan for the building to be integrated into the natural environment of the site. Togna maintains that:

je voulais qu’en arrivant dans ce lieu, les Kanak puissent se repérer tout de suite grâce à des éléments qui les rattachent à ce qu’ils sont. J’avais demandé à Emmanuel (Kasarhérou) si l’on pouvait imaginer des totems avec des symboles de mythes kanak, de façon à ce que les gens n’aient

¹¹⁹ For example, the CCT/ADCK guidebook to the *aire coutumière* affirms: ‘[I]es bâtiments modernes du centre culturel s’élèvent entre deux espaces discrets mais essentiels : d’un côté, le *chemin kanak*, de l’autre, *Mwakaa*. Sans ces deux points de référence à la culture vivante, les cases « inachevées » n’auraient pas de sens. [...] *Mwakaa* et le *chemin kanak* sont les deux passages qui permettent l’entrée dans les cases contemporaines car la parole nouvelle ne vient jamais seule : elle s’accompagne toujours des paroles anciennes.’ Kasarhérou and Klein (2000a: 76). Similarly, the 1998 edition of *Mwà Vée* in print at the time of the CCT’s inauguration cites Marie-Claude Tjibaou as identifying the *chemin kanak* and the *aire coutumière* as the ‘racines’ of the Centre, ‘ancrées dans la société kanak.’ Marie-Claude Tjibaou (1998).

*pas le sentiment, en découvrant ce bâtiment contemporain, que tout ça
c'était bien beau, mais que ce n'était pas « eux ».*¹²⁰

The *chemin kanak* was subsequently conceptualised and developed by Emmanuel Kararhérou (who would, in 1994, become the CCT's Cultural Director) and Bélao Gony (Wedoye),¹²¹ with the assistance of Roger Boulay.¹²²

In its final form, the *chemin kanak* is organised around five groups of plantings discursively constructed as following and 'illustrating' the *Paicî* foundational myth of 'Téâ Kanaké'.¹²³ The CCT/ADCK guidebook to the *chemin kanak* characterises the path as:

*une promenade à travers cinq jardins qui nous racontent les cinq actes
de la vie de Téâ Kanaké, héros culturel kanak, le premier né de tous les
hommes. [...] Les cinq étapes de notre héros sont : L'origine des êtres [;]
La terre nourricière [;] La terre des ancêtres [;] Le pays des esprits [;]
La renaissance[.]*¹²⁴

Through this narrative structure, the *chemin kanak* serves as a means of bridging Kanak 'tradition' to Kanak 'modernity' (as represented in the contemporary Piano building). Thus, Bélao (Gony) Wedoye is cited in *Mwà Vée* as stating: '[l]e Chemin est comme

¹²⁰ Togna (2008a: 25).

¹²¹ Note that Béalo (Gony) Wedoye is identified in *Mwà Vée* as also having participated (along with Marie-Claude Tjibaou, Octave Togna and Jacques Boengkih) in the organisation by the ADCK of the CCT's inauguration. Wedoye (1998a).

¹²² 'Le chemin de Téa Kanaké' (1997); Kasarhérou, Wedoye, Boulay and Merleau-Ponty (1998: 79); Togna (2008a: 25).

¹²³ The plantings along the *chemin kanak* are accompanied by relatively extensive signage with explanatory details provided in relation to the specific significations and uses of particular plants in Kanak culture, inscribed within the overarching narrative of this adaptation of the *Téâ Kanaké* myth. The text on a number of the signs is given in French, English and Japanese, and the plant names and other significant terms or phrases are provided in eight different Kanak languages, each chosen to represent a different, officially recognised *aire coutumière* (as instituted subsequent to the Matignon Accords). More extensive information is also available in the Centre's audio-guides and in the pocket-sized CCT/ADCK guidebook to the *chemin kanak*. This is available in both French and English. My discussion is based on the French edition: Kasarhérou, Wedoye, Boulay and Merleau-Ponty (1998).

¹²⁴ Kasarhérou, Wedoye, Boulay and Merleau-Ponty (1998: 3).

*une clé rituelle pour accéder au nouveau : le Centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou, sans abandonner l'ancien qui fonde notre société et notre culture.*¹²⁵

The *chemin kanak* can be seen to posit and construct pan-Kanak unity and a shared, past–present–future, cultural identity through both the elaboration of the *Téâ Kanaké* foundational myth and the representation of a shared Kanak knowledge and understanding of the uses and symbolism of certain plants.¹²⁶ Both of these elements can also be seen to inform the CCT/ADCK representations of the *chemin kanak* as a ‘*chemin histoire*’.¹²⁷ The political signification inherent to the *chemin kanak* stems from with way in which both of these constructions of Kanak unity and identity posit and emphasise the Kanak people’s ‘historical’ connection with and roots in the land and the country as a whole (that is, Kanak indigeneity), running unbroken from the past to the present and into the future.¹²⁸

In certain respects, this can be seen to echo Tjibaou’s highly political appropriation and adaptation of part of the same *Paicî* oral tradition relating to the figure of *Téâ Kanaké* in *Mélanésie 2000*’s *jeu scénique* and in the book produced the year following the festival.¹²⁹ Moreover, as in these earlier cases, the *chemin kanak* is represented by the CCT/ADCK as being designed to ‘initiate’ the non-Kanak visitor in relation to Kanak culture, identity and ‘tradition’¹³⁰ – suggesting a similar openness to those willing to recognise and accommodate Kanak indigeneity (and, by extension, sovereignty).

¹²⁵ Wedoye (1997: 50-51). This link from past to present is also apparent in the description of the ‘*cinq étapes [du] destin de Téâ Kanaké*’ on the back of the guidebook: ‘[n]otre ancêtre naît de la dent de la lune, cultive ignames et taros, construit sa case ronde, descend au pays des morts et renait à la vie d’aujourd’hui.’ Kasarhérou, Wedoye, Boulay and Merleau-Ponty (1998).

¹²⁶ Both of these elements are emphasised in the first sign on the *chemin kanak*, in a passage which is also reproduced in the guidebook. See Kasarhérou, Wedoye, Boulay and Merleau-Ponty (1998: 5).

¹²⁷ See, for example, CCT/ADCK, ‘Présentation : Le Centre Culturel Tjibaou : Architecture’, 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/le-centre-culturel-tjibaou/architecture>>.

¹²⁸ See also Brown (1998: 133); Bensa (2000: 155). Note that this connection to the land is extended further to the natural environment in general. See, for example, the text on the back cover of the CCT/ADCK guidebook to the *chemin kanak*: Kasarhérou, Wedoye, Boulay and Merleau-Ponty (1998).

¹²⁹ See the discussion in Chapter One and Annex 3.

¹³⁰ CCT/ADCK, ‘Présentation : Le Centre Culturel Tjibaou : Architecture’, 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/le-centre-culturel-tjibaou/architecture>>.

However, according to Bensa, the attempt to present Kanak culture and unity (and, effectively, to (re)claim Kanak sovereignty) through the construction of ‘une sorte de parabole mélanésien’ in both *Mélanésie 2000*’s *jeu scénique* and in *Kanaké, Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie* represents ‘un effort très personnel’ of Tjibaou – ‘les Kanak n’ont jamais fait de l’histoire de Kanaké une épopée nationale’.¹³¹ The fact that the *Téa Kanaké* myth has been appropriated from the tradition of a particular culturo-linguistic group (and, indeed, from just one among several variants of the same myth) is largely downplayed in the signs along the *chemin kanak* and in the associated CCT/ADCK materials.¹³² This can be seen to strengthen the inherently political

¹³¹ Bensa (1995a: 299). Note that the extent to which the numerous subsequent appropriations of the ‘*Téa Kanaké*’ figure and myth can be seen to draw from and contribute to the *Paicî* tradition and/or take as their primary reference Tjibaou’s appropriation of that tradition in 1975/76 and/or the CCT’s later appropriation in the Centre’s *chemin kanak*, raises interesting issues regarding the politics of these appropriations and associated transformations given the way in which, as highlighted by Godin, this ‘[r]écit des origines de la société pour une fraction importante des clans de l’aire linguistique paicî-cèmuhi [...] est devenu en quelques années un des textes emblématiques de la revendication nationaliste, puis sous la forme d’un «chemin», le support narratif d’une présentation des principales plantes «médicinales» de la Grande Terre et des Iles Loyauté.’ Godin (1999: 342). Such subsequent appropriations include: naming one of the ‘cases’ of the CCT’s Piano building – that in which a permanent audiovisual presentation on Kanak culture, past-present-future, is shown – ‘*Kanaké*’ (each ‘case’ having been given a Kanak word from one of the 28 Kanak languages as a name); the contemporary dance, entitled *Aji Aboro*, choreographed for and performed for the first time during the CCT’s inaugural arts festival subsequent to its opening to the public in June 1998 (see ‘Le chemin d’*Aji Aboro*’ (1998)); the play written by Déwé Gorodé entitled *Kēnāké 2000*, performed for the first time during the eighth Festival of Pacific Arts, hosted by New Caledonia in 2000 (see Brown (2008)); the reproduction in the new *Maison de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* in Paris inaugurated in 2008 of the CCT’s *chemin kanak* and its ‘*cinq actes de la vie de Téa Kanaké*’ (see Bachet (2008: 6-7)); and the contemporary dance/theatre piece, entitled *Pomemi*, performed during the opening ceremony of the fourth Festival of Melanesian Arts hosted by New Caledonia in 2010 (see Comité organisateur du 4ème Festival des Arts Mélanésiens (2010: 17-18); Marjorie Bernard, ‘La Mélanésie rassemblée à Koné’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/09/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>). However, these considerations lie beyond the scope of the present thesis.

¹³² Note that Godin distinguishes Tjibaou’s endeavour in 1975/76 from that of the CCT/ADCK in the *chemin kanak*, and is particularly critical of the latter – see Godin (1999: 343-344). Note also that, although there is nothing on the site or in the guidebook to indicate this, various elements of the realisation of the *chemin kanak* were inscribed in ‘customary’ practices and exchanges engaged by and between Kanak individuals and groups from different culturo-linguistic regions. For example, in the section of the *chemin kanak* constructed to represent ‘la terre des ancêtres’ (where ‘les esprits’ teach *Téa Kanaké* about life in society and he ‘échange les premières ignames et construit la grande case ronde des origines’ in the narrative of the *chemin*: Kasarhérou, Wedoye, Boulay and Merleau-Ponty (1998: 31)), the ‘*tertres coutumiers*’ were constructed by the ‘*vieux Benoît Tjibaou, dit Boulet*’, from the ‘*chefferie Bwarhat*’ in Hienghène, who, as the ‘*dépositaire*’ of the name Tjibaou, was centrally implicated in the ‘customary’ conferral of that name on the CCT which culminated in the inauguration ceremonies (discussed below). See ‘CCJMT ...et le projet devient réalité’ (1996: 42); del Rio (1998b). According to

implications of the particular use of the *Téâ Kanaké* foundational myth in the CCT's *chemin kanak* as positing and emphasising Kanak indigeneity.

On the other hand, particularly given these political implications are generally left implicit in CCT/ADCK discourse relating to the *chemin kanak*, an emphasis on the Kanak people's posited 'natural harmony' with the natural environment potentially runs the risk of opening a space for or perpetuating 'primitivist' constructions of Kanak identity defined primarily in reference to the past, which might tend to discredit, occlude or foreclose contemporary Kanak agency, including in the political domain. These issues are discussed further below in relation to the print-media coverage of the CCT and its inauguration.

The central importance of the '*aire coutumière*' or '*Mwakaa*' and its representation of the Kanak people

The *chemin kanak* and the larger garden of which it forms part also provide a link between the contemporary building of the Centre and the third key space/element of the CCT – the '*aire coutumière*', or '*Mwakaa*'.¹³³ On Bensa's account, this space was, from the outset, placed by the ADCK beyond the purview of the architect and his team.¹³⁴ Both Bensa and key representatives of the ADCK have distinguished between these spaces on the basis of the different functions they are identified as serving. On the one hand, Piano's building is identified as a place in and through which Kanak culture is 'represented', using modern media and technologies, for both a Kanak and an

Mwà Vée in 1996, the transplantation of the 14 '*pins coloniaux*' to the site from several locations in the south of the *Grande Terre* '*s'est effectuée dans le respect de la coutume, toute comme l'est déjà celle du rocher issu de la tribu de la Conception dans les environs de Nouméa et qui viendra symboliser, au cœur de l'espace occupé par le Centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou, la création du monde selon la vision kanak d'une dent de Lune tombée sur Terre*' in the first section of the *chemin kanak*: 'CCJMT ...et le projet devient réalité' (1996: 42).

¹³³ This orthography appears in CCT/ADCK publications, CCT guidebooks and on signposts at the Centre. With a different orthography this term has also been used to designate the statue created in 2003 to mark the 150th anniversary of the '*prise de possession*' of New Caledonia by France and public monument and square constructed subsequently around the statue, discussed in Chapter Three.

¹³⁴ Bensa (2000: 105); Bensa (2002: 190). Note that Bensa does not refer to this space as '*Mwakaa*'.

‘external’, non-Kanak audience. In Bensa’s words, Piano’s building is a symbol, the referent of which is Kanak ‘culture’.¹³⁵ On the other hand, the *aire coutumière* is identified as a place in and through which Kanak culture (primarily through Kanak ‘custom’) is ‘actually lived’, thereby inscribing the CCT within a broader, ‘internal’ Kanak legitimacy and dynamic of socio-political and cultural renewal and perpetuation.¹³⁶

Indeed, in the official discourse of the CCT/ADCK and its key personnel, the *aire coutumière* confers upon the Centre as a whole both its meaning and its legitimacy. The sign outside the entrance to the CCT’s *Mwakaa* frames the significance of this site in the following terms: ‘[c]et espace donne son sens à l’ensemble du Centre culturel. Il l’installe matériellement dans la tradition kanak.’¹³⁷ As seen below, the official inauguration of the CCT on the 4 May 1998 was itself structured around a number of significant Kanak ‘customary’ ceremonies which took place primarily on the Centre’s *aire coutumière*. The CCT/ADCK guidebook to the *aire coutumière* states that the ‘*Mwakaa* garde l’empreinte de toutes les paroles qui enracinent le centre culturel Tjibaou en pays kanak et lui donnent ainsi sa légitimité.’¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Bensa (2002: 190).

¹³⁶ According to Béalo (Gony) Wedoye, writing in the 1998 edition of *Mwà Vée* in print at the time of the CCT’s inauguration: ‘[c]’est important d’avoir créé ces deux espaces. L’espace contemporain, où la culture va être diffusée au plus grand nombre par le biais des moyens d’information d’aujourd’hui. [...] L’espace coutumier du Centre culturel avec ses trois grandes cases, [...] c’est l’espace des ancêtres où la culture kanak profonde va apparaître telle qu’elle est, telle qu’elle se vit, de manière brute je dirais. Là où les Kanak se sentent vraiment Kanak, là où ils se sentent vraiment chez eux, entre eux.’ Wedoye (1998b: 20).

¹³⁷ The English version of this section of the text on the sign runs: ‘[t]his area gives the Cultural Centre as a whole its true identity. This is the Centre’s tangible bond with Kanak tradition.’

¹³⁸ Kasarhérou and Klein (2000a: 64). In this connection it is significant to note Togna’s comments in 1995 on the twentieth anniversary of *Mélanésie 2000*, an event which he characterises as having been ‘*la premier “tabac” qui portait le message de notre identité*’, ‘*tabac*’ being a reference here to Kanak ‘customary’ ceremonies of exchange and the accompanying ‘*paroles*’. Togna goes on to affirm that ‘*ce “tabac” circule toujours, il est vivant*’, and identifies this ‘*tabac*’ as being ‘*matérialisé pour les kanak par des gestes coutumiers importants et pour les non-kanak par des réalisations comme l’ADCK ou le Centre Culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou*.’ Togna (1995: 5). These comments illustrate both the fundamental importance of Kanak ‘custom’ and of the exchange and reactivation of ‘*la parole*’ for the constitution and perpetuation of Kanak culture and identity, above and beyond any Western-style cultural festivals or institutions, as well as the divergence between the Kanak and the non-Kanak perspectives, understandings

While ‘*Mwakaa*’ is identified as meaning ‘« *grande case* » ou « *chefferie* » en langue *drubea*’ in the CCT/ADCK guidebook to this space,¹³⁹ the guidebook also states that the *aire coutumière* is not designed to be ‘*la représentation d’une chefferie traditionnelle*’, even though ‘*on y retrouve, comme sur le chemin kanak, les principaux repères culturels.*’¹⁴⁰ As noted by Béalo (Gony) Wedoye, the CCT’s ‘*zone coutumière est faite pour organiser des cérémonies représentant l’ensemble du pays*’,¹⁴¹ and the physical articulation and organisation of the *Mwakaa* site is designed to represent the Kanak people as a whole. At the time of the Centre’s inauguration, Togna emphasised the need for the CCT to federate Kanak ‘customary’ authorities and people, affirming that the Centre must belong to and represent ‘*l’ensemble des Kanak.*’¹⁴² As explained in Annex 6, this pan-Kanak register, the accompanying contemporary reformulation of Kanak ‘custom’ and the associated organisation of space in the CCT’s *Mwakaa* can be seen to bear strong similarities to aspects of *Mélanésie 2000*’s main festival.

The CCT’s *Mwakaa* is dominated by three ‘traditional’ Kanak *grandes cases*. While these *cases* have occasionally been identified as representing the three New Caledonian Provinces,¹⁴³ CCT/ADCK publications generally link them to the eight Kanak *aires coutumières* (officially recognised since the Matignon Accords) or to different Kanak ‘*pays*’ or ‘*gens*’, grouped broadly in reference to their geographical location in ‘the North’, ‘the South’ and ‘the Islands’.¹⁴⁴ The signification of these three *cases* and the other elements of the CCT’s *Mwakaa* is also closely linked to their relative physical positions. These relative positions are articulated by the CCT/ADCK guidebook to the *Mwakaa* predominantly in terms of a ‘traditional’ Kanak frame of reference, relating in

and experiences in this regard. They consequently also illustrate the particular significance of the CCT’s *aire coutumière* from this Kanak perspective.

¹³⁹ Kasarhérou and Klein (2000a: 3). Elsewhere in the same publication, the phrase ‘*l’espace coutumier*’ is also translated into *Drubea* as ‘*mwakaa*’: *ibid.*, 28.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁴¹ Wedoye (1998b: 20).

¹⁴² Togna (1998: 19).

¹⁴³ See, for example, Bensa (2000: 118); Bensa (2002: 197-198); Del Rio (2008: 2).

¹⁴⁴ This is discussed in more detail in Annex 6.

particular to the position of the '*maîtres de la terre*' on which the CCT and its *Mwakaa* have been constructed.¹⁴⁵ The same 'traditional' frame of reference was also central to the organisation by the ADCK of the CCT's official inauguration, which largely took place on the *Mwakaa* site.

Founding the CCT's legitimacy in Kanak 'custom'

The '*démarche traditionnelle dans un contexte contemporain*'¹⁴⁶ engaged by Togna and the ADCK team from the very beginning of the CCT project in the early 1990s, culminating in the Centre's official inauguration in 1998, was grounded on the premise that: '[l]a légitimité de cet outil contemporain s'accroche à sa légitimité traditionnelle.'¹⁴⁷ This approach was very similar to that adopted in 1974/75 by Tjibaou and the other organisers of *Mélanésie 2000*. Thus, while Togna acknowledged in 1998 in *Mwà Vée* that the CCT project and its realisation were the result of '*une longue lutte pour la reconnaissance de la culture kanak*'¹⁴⁸ and formed part of the political process of *rééquilibrage* engaged by the Matignon Accords, he did not frame its fundamental legitimacy in reference to this broader political struggle and the contemporary political context, but in reference to the Centre's inscription in Kanak 'custom' (itself identifiable as a specifically Kanak mode of politics).¹⁴⁹ Similarly, while the program of the CCT's inauguration incorporated speeches by political representatives of the key signatories to the Matignon Accords, who would the following day also become

¹⁴⁵ Kasarhérou and Klein (2000a). See the discussion in Annex 6.

¹⁴⁶ Togna (1998: 18).

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 19.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ In an interview in 2008 Togna also affirms that at the time of the institution of the ADCK in 1989 its primary focus was to realise '*son insertion dans le tissu culturel et le tissu coutumier kanak*.' Togna consequently maintains: '*il nous fallait en effet effectuer les démarches nécessaires auprès de la population kanak et des autorités coutumières pour l'insérer dans le réseau de la société kanak*.' Togna (2008a: 22). Indeed, Togna affirms: '*il était primordial pour moi que l'ADCK soit acceptée par les autorités coutumières*.' Togna (2008a: 23).

signatories to the Noumea Accord, priority was given to the Kanak 'customary' authorities and the so-called 'customary inauguration' of the CCT.

Stemming from the adoption of this '*démarche traditionnelle*' by the ADCK from the outset of the CCT project, the implication of Kanak 'customary' authorities identified as representing the '*maîtres de la terre*' associated with the particular site on which the CCT was to be constructed became of central importance. As highlighted by Togna, while the Municipal Council of Noumea had ceded the land title of the site to the ADCK in French law, '[p]our nous Kanak, ce papier, de référence européenne, est moins significative que l'empreinte des clans qui habite ce lieu.'¹⁵⁰ This is supported by the results of the study conducted for the ADCK in 1992, which indicated that the Kanak population considered the 'customary' implications of the construction of the CCT on Kanak land to be of vital importance to the nature and legitimacy of the project.¹⁵¹

According to Togna's account, three key aspects of the '*démarche traditionnelle*' engaged by the ADCK to ensure the legitimacy of the CCT from a Kanak 'customary' perspective can be identified.¹⁵² These related to: gaining the permission of the '*maîtres de la terre*' to construct the Centre on the site; the 'customary' transferral of the Kanak name, Tjibaou, 'owned' by a particular group from the north of the *Grande Terre* to the land on which the CCT was built in the south, via the '*maîtres de la terre*' of the site; and the 'customary' conferral of the CCT and the pursuit of its missions to the ADCK by the '*maîtres de la terre*'.¹⁵³ These processes were finalised in the 'customary' ceremonies of the Centre's inauguration on 4 May 1998, which were designed to

¹⁵⁰ Togna (1998: 18).

¹⁵¹ Bensa (1992: 10).

¹⁵² An additional element should also be highlighted: the 'customary' process engaged in relation to the 'traditional' owners of the *Paicî* myth relating to *Téà Kanaké* to gain their permission for its use in the CCT's *chemin kanak*. This 'customary' process built upon that engaged in 1975 by Jean-Marie Tjibaou to gain permission for the use of versions of the same myth in *Mélanésie 2000's jeu scénique* and in *Kanaké : Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie*. Marie-Claude Tjibaou was involved in both of these interconnecting customary processes. See Togna's comments in Klein (1999e: 337).

¹⁵³ Togna (1998: 18-19). See also the contributions by Jacques Boengkih, Béalo (Gony) Wedoye and Marie-Claude Tjibaou in *Mwà Vée*, no. 20, April-May-June, 1998. These 'customary' process and the inauguration are also discussed in Dussy (2003).

incorporate ‘customary’ representatives from the eight *aires coutumières* as a means of federating all Kanak people and communities in relation to the CCT. Through the Centre’s ‘customary inauguration’, Kanak people were positioned by the ADCK as the major actors of (rather than simply being spectators at) the inauguration and the ‘birth’ of the Centre.¹⁵⁴ These ‘customary’ processes culminating in the inauguration and some of their more problematic aspects and the difficulties encountered by the ADCK as a result of certain inter-Kanak rivalries and conflicts are discussed further in Annex 7.

The absence of local non-Kanak inclusion and active participation in the CCT’s ‘customary inauguration’

Similar to the ‘customary’ ceremonies associated with *Mélanésie 2000*’s main festival, the ‘customary’ exchanges between Kanak representatives of the ‘*maîtres de la terre*’, of Kanak groups from other regions and of the ADCK itself constituted the primary focus in the ceremonies organised on the 4 May for the CCT’s inauguration and did not involve the participation of representatives of New Caledonia’s non-Kanak communities.¹⁵⁵ While Jacques Lafleur (representing the RPCR as a signatory to the Matignon Accords) spoke on the 4 May during the portion of the inauguration’s program devoted to speeches by political officials and representatives ‘[à] l’invitation des autorités de l’aire Djubea-Kapone’,¹⁵⁶ the ADCK can be seen to have distinguished this section of the inauguration from the culmination and realisation of the CCT’s

¹⁵⁴ Togna (1998: 18).

¹⁵⁵ Note the criticism of this expressed by Nicole Waïa: Waïa (1998: 14). While LNC’s coverage of the CCT’s inauguration suggests that Togna presented Prime Minister Lionel Jospin with a Kanak ‘traditional’ Kanak ‘money’, no similar exchanges appear to have taken place between the ADCK or Kanak ‘customary’ representatives and representatives of New Caledonia’s non-Kanak communities: see Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Pour la première fois, un nom a été donné coutumièrement à un bâtiment avec l’approbation de toutes les grandes chefferies – Une page d’histoire de la coutume et de la politique du pays’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 05/05/1998, 26.

¹⁵⁶ ‘De temps forts en temps forts’ (1998: 11). These speeches were delivered after those given by local religious representatives, who were similarly invited to speak by the ‘*maîtres de la terre*’.

Kanak 'customary inauguration', to which it accorded primary importance and significance.¹⁵⁷

This relative lack of inclusion and active participation is also reflected in the predominance of the Kanak 'referent' of the CCT as a whole, with the Centre's posited openness towards and inclusion of New Caledonia's non-Kanak communities (emphasised particularly from the time of the inauguration and associated with the new political context dominated by the finalisation of the Noumea Accord)¹⁵⁸ being the least readily apparent orientation of the Centre in terms of the conceptualisation and realisation of its form and content.

The *accueil* of Pacific representatives to the CCT on the second day of the inauguration

It is also significant that these non-Kanak communities played no role in the events organised to mark the CCT's inauguration on the 5 May, primarily focused on the welcome and introduction to the Centre of the official representatives from neighbouring Pacific countries invited to the inauguration, some of whom were also present in Noumea for a meeting of the Council of Pacific Arts.¹⁵⁹ According to the inauguration program given to attendees, these '*délégations du Pacifique*' were 'customarily' welcomed by the ADCK on the CCT's *Mwakaa*, in the presence of the

¹⁵⁷ 'De temps forts en temps forts' (1998); and see the contributions by Jacques Boengkih, Béalo (Gony) Wedoye, Marie-Claude Tjibaou and Octave Togna in *Mwà Vêé*, no. 20, April–May–June, 1998. Similarly, while the inauguration festivities on the 4 May ended with a *pilou* dance in which all (Kanak and non-Kanak) attendees were invited to participate (see del Rio (1998a)), as in the case of the dance at the end of *Mélanésie 2000's jeu scénique*, this inclusion and participation does not equate to the inclusion and active participation of representatives of New Caledonia's non-Kanak settler and immigrant communities in the socio-political processes engaged by Kanak representatives during the CCT's 'customary inauguration'.

¹⁵⁸ See the discussion below.

¹⁵⁹ The Council of Pacific Arts (now the Council of Pacific Arts and Culture) is the regional body associated with the organisation of the Festival of Pacific Arts. Note that this second day ended with the Kanak 'customary' ceremonies of farewell, firstly between the '*maîtres de la terre*' and the other Kanak 'customary' representatives, and secondly, in private, between the '*maîtres de la terre*' and representatives of the ADCK: see del Rio (1998a).

Kanak ‘customary’ authorities who had been the central actors the day before.¹⁶⁰ This section of the CCT’s inauguration-related events echoes the CCT’s orientation towards and incorporation of a broader Oceanic representation and emphasis in conjunction with its predominantly Kanak focus.¹⁶¹

This second day of the CCT’s inauguration bears some similarities to the ‘customary’ welcome of representatives from different Pacific countries and other indigenous peoples at the 1993 *Fête des peuples indigènes* held in Poindimié, which similarly does not appear to have focused on exchanges between Kanak and local non-Kanak communities. As discussed above, Néaoutyine inscribed this Kanak *accueil* within the project and dynamics of Kanak nationalism. A similar Kanak nationalist inflection is also apparent in Marie-Claude Tjibaou’s 1996 comments regarding the Kanak *accueil* of the eighth Festival of Pacific Arts in 2000. The ADCK’s ‘customary’ *accueil* of the foreign delegations from the Pacific to the CCT on the 5 May 1998, following from the ‘customary’ ceremonies the day before, might be seen to resonate with Néaoutyine’s framing of the 1993 event and Marie-Claude Tjibaou’s 1996 comments relating to the Festival of Pacific Arts, given the political implications of the act and process of *accueil* in Kanak ‘custom’ for questions of sovereignty, particularly when transposed into a ‘national’, pan-Kanak register.¹⁶²

However, as seen below, different political implications were foregrounded by the ADCK in relation to the CCT’s 1998 inauguration, which was largely inscribed in the

¹⁶⁰ The program explains that the ADCK ‘*est depuis hier soir chez elle et peut donc [...] accueillir*’ these Pacific delegations: *ibid.*

¹⁶¹ The connection to the Pacific is readily apparent in Piano’s main building through, for example, the permanent displays of contemporary Kanak and Oceanic art housed therein. According to the CCT/ADCK website, the plants of the *chemin kanak* also draw a link to ‘*l’environnement géographique, écologique et culturel des autres pays du Pacifique.*’ CCT/ADCK, ‘Présentation : Le Centre Culturel Tjibaou : Architecture’, 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/le-centre-culturel-tjibaou/architecture>>. It is on the Centre’s *aire coutumière* that representatives and groups from other Pacific countries and peoples are formally ‘customarily’ welcomed to the CCT by Kanak representatives (generally being members of the ADCK and/or certain recognised Kanak ‘customary’ representatives) – as was the case on the 5 May 1998. The *Mwakaa* might be seen to represent such ‘customary’ or ‘traditional’ understandings and modes of interaction broadly shared by indigenous peoples throughout the Pacific region.

¹⁶² See the discussion in the Introduction and in Chapter One.

perspective opened by the Noumea Accord and was consequently not explicitly framed in relation to the political project and goal of Kanak independence as such.

Coverage of the Kanak ‘customary’ inscription of the CCT’s physical realisation and inauguration in the local written press

The significance and relative importance attributed in the press to the CCT’s three spaces/elements and to the agency of the different actors involved in the Centre’s physical conceptualisation and realisation

While the CCT’s physical conceptualisation and realisation constitutes one of the primary foci of the articles published by the local written press in relation to the Centre prior to the inauguration, there is little to no discussion of or emphasis placed on the central importance (from the ADCK’s perspective) of the *aire coutumière* and the CCT site’s ‘customary’ inscription.¹⁶³ Moreover, Piano’s agency is generally foregrounded.

For example, the first substantial article published by LNC on the CCT in 1998 particularly emphasises the role of Piano in relation to the Centre’s conceptualisation and construction, rather than the role of the ADCK (or, indeed, of the relevant ‘customary’ authorities associated with the ‘*démarche coutumière*’ engaged in relation to the project, who are not mentioned).¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ The principal articles published by LNC in 1998 in the lead up to the CCT’s inauguration relate to the completion of the Centre’s construction, its main design features and components, the Metropolitan French officials expected to attend the inauguration and, to a lesser degree, the nature and preparation of some of the exhibitions and performances to be offered to the public subsequent to the CCT’s public opening. Although a number of brief references to the CCT’s inauguration appear in various articles during this period (totaling 13 from the beginning of January to the 3 May), there is relatively little detailed or sustained coverage of this topic in LNC until the edition published for Monday the 4 May 1998. Between the 1 January and the 3 May, the CCT is the principal focus of 9 articles, only 6 of which can be considered substantial and all of which are published in March and April. During this period the CCT is referred to on the paper’s front page on only 3 occasions, all of which are in March.

¹⁶⁴ Olivier Bonetti, ‘Après trois ans de travaux – Le Centre culturel Tjibaou terminé pour son inauguration en mai’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/03/1998, 3.

This emphasis is clear in the following passage, which is also representative for its focus on the CCT's contemporary building rather than its other spaces/elements:

*[c]onçu autour des cases de trois villages reliés entre eux par une épine dorsale qui évoque l'allée centrale de l'habitat traditionnel kanak, ce centre se veut le véhicule d'un message essentiel défini par Renzo Piano. Il s'agit de l'intégration de la tradition et de la modernité, ce que l'architecte appelle les souvenirs de cases.*¹⁶⁵

At a later point in this text the ADCK's role and agency in relation to the conceptualisation of the architectural form of the CCT (again treated as largely synonymous with the contemporary building) is acknowledged to a greater degree. However, through the particular phrasing used in this instance, the role and agency of Piano is still foregrounded and accorded greater importance.¹⁶⁶ Similar collaborative (and secondary) agency and credit is, moreover, accorded to the ADCK in relation to the realisation of the Centre's *chemin kanak*, the plantings of which, according to this article, '*ont été sélectionnées en collaboration avec un ethnologue et l'ADCK.*'¹⁶⁷ The ADCK is only accorded full credit and independent agency in one respect – in relation to the organisation of the exhibitions to be housed in the CCT.¹⁶⁸ While one paragraph is devoted to a cursory description of the *chemin kanak*, there is no indication or explanation of the significance and central symbolic and functional role of the CCT's *aire coutumière* beyond that suggested by its name and the fact that it '*rassemblera trois cases traditionnelles.*'¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ The article states: '[d]ix volumes émergent des frondaisons depuis novembre 1997 et décrivent un arc de cercle sur la presqu'île de Tina. Une construction symbolique, évocation d'une synthèse entre tradition et modernité, dessinée par l'architecte Renzo Piano en collaboration avec l'ADCK' *ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ It might be noted that another substantial article on the CCT published by LNC two days later clearly attributes the organisation of the Centre's inauguration to the ADCK. However, as suggested in the article's headline, LNC can be seen to position itself critically in relation to this organisation, given that the inauguration will not be an open, public event. 'Malgré une inauguration prévue les 4 et 5 mai – Le centre culturel Tjibaou ouvert au public seulement le 16 juin', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 04/03/1998, 12. See the discussion below.

¹⁶⁹ Olivier Bonetti, 'Après trois ans de travaux – Le Centre culturel Tjibaou terminé pour son inauguration en mai', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 02/03/1998, 3. These *cases* are, moreover, identified as

Similar emphasis on Piano's agency and on the contemporary CCT building is also apparent in another substantial article on the CCT published a week later by the daily newspaper.¹⁷⁰ This article, which purports to give the reader a '[v]isite guidée' of the CCT, is accompanied by five photographs, the two most prominent of which show the contemporary building. Two small images show parts of the *chemin kanak* and only one image is devoted to the *aire coutumière*. While both the contemporary building and the *chemin kanak* are discussed in the article's main body of text, the *aire coutumière* is only discussed in the caption to the relevant image, which simply indicates the progress of the construction of the three *cases*.

The captions accompanying the two images of the contemporary building both emphasise the '*volonté de l'architecte*' in relation to its conceptualisation and form. For example, one caption affirms that:

*la forme des cases donne l'impression qu'elles ne sont pas totalement achevées. Une volonté de l'architecte qui a trouvé ainsi un équilibre entre tradition et modernité, patrimoine et création.*¹⁷¹

One of the subheadings in the article's text qualifies the CCT as '[u]ne réussite architecturale', and while the ADCK is given credit for having chosen Piano to design the Centre, Piano's agency and talent are clearly foregrounded in relation to the posited 'success' of the CCT as an architectural monument. Moreover, while the headline associated with this article printed on the front page characterises the CCT as '[u]n monument à la gloire de la culture kanake',¹⁷² the article's main body of text highlights

representing the three Provinces – North, South and Loyalty Islands. However, none of the subsequent references to these three cases in LNC's coverage identify them as representing the three Provinces. For example, an article published in April 1998 in relation to the progress on the CCT's construction affirms: '[L]es grandes cases sont quasi achevées. Il ne reste désormais que les petites cases coutumières à finir. Il y en a trois, celle du Nord (Hoot-Mawhap), celle du Sud (Drubea Kaponé) et celle des Iles (Drehu).' 'Inauguré le 4 mai et ouvert au public le 16 juin – Les travaux du centre Jean-Marie Tjibaou bientôt achevés', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 10/04/1998, 7.

¹⁷⁰ 'Deux mois avant l'inauguration – Visite guide au Centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/03/1998, 13.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² 'CENTRE TJIBAOU – Un monument à la gloire de la culture kanake', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/03/1998, 1.

Piano's inspiration from other contemporary architects in addition to his inspiration from Kanak culture and 'traditional' architecture.¹⁷³

Furthermore, while this article indicates the reason behind the contemporary reformulation of the 'traditional' *case* – represented as the means of balancing '*tradition et modernité, patrimoine et création*'¹⁷⁴ – there is no discussion of the symbolism and significance of the 'traditional' Kanak *case* and its constituent elements and organisation of space. There is also no discussion of the political implications of the reorganisation of those elements and that space in the contemporary building – its 'democratisation' of 'traditional' Kanak architecture, as suggested by Bensa.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, given the emphasis on Piano's agency and the posited brilliance of the CCT's modern (Western) architecture, the political implications and significance of the project are arguably more closely (if implicitly) aligned with French New Caledonia rather than with Kanak nationalism in the local daily newspaper's coverage of the CCT published in the period leading up to the inauguration.

LNC does emphasise in this article the CCT's posited symbiotic harmony with its natural surrounds (again identified as corresponding to the '*volonté de l'architecte*' and associated with the marriage of 'tradition' and 'modernity' in the Centre's architecture). For example, the caption to a large aerial photograph of the CCT's contemporary building with the surrounding natural environment affirms that:

[L]e centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou se marie avec la nature environnante. Une volonté de l'architecte qui, dès la genèse du projet, avait expliqué sa démarche en ces termes : « le lien entre la nature et le bâti doit être tellement étroit qu'ils devront transpirer ensemble des

¹⁷³ The article affirms that: '[s]i de l'extérieur, on retrouve à travers la forme du bâtiment, des éléments inspirés de la culture kanake, l'intérieur révèle une autre facette. L'inspiration de l'œuvre de Jean Prouvé et de Le Corbusier est évidente. Les cases sont en effet distribuées autour d'une arête centrale dont le plafond bas est sans doute inspiré des cités Radieuses.' 'Deux mois avant l'inauguration – Visite guidée au Centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/03/1998, 13.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ This is not indicated or discussed in any of the articles published in the local written press in relation to the Centre.

*mêmes odeurs, respirer le même vent, ne former qu'un seul et unique espace semi-construit, presque terminé ».*¹⁷⁶

This emphasis is even more pronounced in the main article on the CCT published by LNC in the edition in print on the first day of the Centre's inauguration.¹⁷⁷ This article affirms: '*[u]n pied dans la tradition, l'autre dans la modernité, le Centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou entretiennent, comme les Kanaks, un rapport charnel avec le végétal.*'¹⁷⁸ The Centre's interconnection with nature is also linked in this article to the *chemin kanak*.¹⁷⁹

Particularly given the newspaper's emphasis on Piano's agency regarding the CCT's conceptualisation and its architectural 'marriage' of 'tradition' and 'modernity', this interrelated emphasis on the CCT's harmony with and strong links to the natural environment can itself be seen to have significant, highly political implications. These implications stem from the associated identification of Kanak culture and people with the natural environment and the primitivism that this could be understood to entail. Defining Kanak culture and people in reference to the past in this manner potentially

¹⁷⁶ 'Deux mois avant l'inauguration – Visite guidée au Centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 09/03/1998, 13. The lead paragraph also characterises the CCT as: '*[é]mergant des frondaisons de la baie de Tina*'. A very similar description appears early in the article's main text. At a later point, the text affirms that: '*[l]'édifice est imposant, mais il sait se faire discret, s'effacer devant la nature et l'environnement qu'il met en valeur.*'

¹⁷⁷ Olivier Bonetti, 'Le dernier des grands travaux du président Mitterrand – Le Centre Tjibaou : une main tendue entre les communautés', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 04/05/1998, 6-7.

¹⁷⁸ This passage appears under the subheading: '*[i]mergé dans le végétal*'. Four large photographs accompany the text, each of which depict the CCT's contemporary building embedded within the surrounding natural environment. The captions of two of these photographs, which are identical to those accompanying similar images published the earlier article discussed above, emphasise both the architecture's 'marriage' of 'tradition' and 'modernity', and its own 'marriage' with the natural environment. These captions run: '*[c]omme le montre ce cliché, les cases donnent une impression d'inachevé. Une volonté de l'architecte qui a trouvé ainsi un équilibre entre tradition et modernité, patrimoine et création.*'; '*[l]e Centre culturel Tjibaou se marie avec la nature environnante. Renzo Piano explique sa démarche en ces termes : « Le lien entre la nature et le bâti doit être tellement étroit qu'ils devront transpirer ensemble les mêmes odeurs, respirer le même vent, ne former qu'un seul et unique espace semi-construit, presque terminé ».*' Original emphasis, *ibid.*, 6; and see 'Deux mois avant l'inauguration – Visite guidée au Centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 09/03/1998, 13.

¹⁷⁹ Olivier Bonetti, 'Le dernier des grands travaux du président Mitterrand – Le Centre Tjibaou : une main tendue entre les communautés', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 04/05/1998, 6.

forecloses present and future Kanak agency. Ironically, this discursive representation of the CCT by LNC might thus counteract the ADCK's expressed desire to move beyond the identification of Kanak culture and people predominantly with the past through the appropriation of Tjibaou's conceptualisation of Kanak identity and 'authenticity' as dynamic and inescapably interlinked to socio-historical context.

The coverage of the CCT published by TDC is very similar to that published by LNC.¹⁸⁰ In its June 1998 edition, TDC can, like the daily newspaper, be seen to emphasise the virtuosity of the CCT's modern architecture and of its architect.¹⁸¹ The harmony between the contemporary building and its natural environment is also particularly emphasised,¹⁸² and the *chemin kanak* is described as '*noyé dans le végétal*'¹⁸³ and '[b]ordé d'essences locales évoquant le lien profond qui unit le monde kanak à la nature'.¹⁸⁴

The very minimal coverage of the CCT in 1998 published by LNH mobilises a very similar discourse with a similar emphasis to that of LNC and TDC, discussed above. In the edition published before the inauguration, LNH includes a two-page spread

¹⁸⁰ Indeed, the full-page article published in the May 1998 edition of TDC and a number of the articles comprising the eleven-page feature on the CCT's inauguration published in the June edition can be identified as slightly edited and abridged versions of articles that were originally published by LNC. See 'Centre Jean-Marie Tjibaou: Inauguration le 4 mai, ouverture au public le 16 juin', *Tour de Côte*, no. 83, May 1998, 30; 'En présence du premier Ministre – Le centre culturel Tjibaou inauguré', *Tour de Côte*, no. 84, June 1998, 6-16.

¹⁸¹ For example, the lead, introductory text to the eleven-page feature on the CCT's inauguration begins: '[I]es avis sont unanimes. Le centre culturel Tjibaou est une réussite. Ses dix cases qui s'élancent vers le ciel sont désormais une référence architecturale unique dans toute l'Océanie.' 'En présence du premier Ministre – Le centre culturel Tjibaou inauguré', *Tour de Côte*, no. 84, June 1998, 6. See also 'Hommages à la mémoire de Jean-Marie Tjibaou et à une œuvre exceptionnelle', *Tour de Côte*, no. 84, June 1998, 8; 'Renzo Piano couronné par le « Pritzker »', *Tour de Côte*, no. 84, June 1998, 13.

¹⁸² One article is entitled: '[I]e centre Tjibaou – Un immense village noyé dans la nature'. The lead paragraph to this article affirms: '[i]nséré au milieu d'un domaine de 8 hectares dont la végétation a été préservée et même enrichie de nombreuses essences locales, les 6.600 m2 de surface bâtie sont parfaitement intégrées à la nature.' 'Le centre Tjibaou – Un immense village noyé dans la nature', *Tour de Côte*, no. 84, June 1998, 12.

¹⁸³ 'En présence du premier Ministre – Le centre culturel Tjibaou inauguré', *Tour de Côte*, no. 84, June 1998, 16.

¹⁸⁴ 'Le centre Tjibaou – Un immense village noyé dans la nature', *Tour de Côte*, no. 84, June 1998, 13.

dominated by 11 colour photographs of the CCT's exterior.¹⁸⁵ The accompanying text classifies the CCT as an '*œuvre de toute beauté*', and describes the process of its construction and completion itself by metaphors drawn from nature: '*[L]e Centre a poussé tout près de nous et ouvre aujourd'hui ses pétales au monde.*'¹⁸⁶ One caption also affirms '*l'heureux mariage de la nature et de la modernité*' in its description of the CCT.¹⁸⁷

Some similar tendencies are identified by Message in her brief survey and analysis of the international print-media coverage of the CCT's inauguration, particularly in 'Arts' columns. Message contends that:

[f]ocusing [...] on the synergies that appear to exist between the building and its environment in the first place, and on the relationship between the building and traditional 'prehistoric' culture in the second, arts columnists may contribute to the political neutralisation of the CCT. This reportage risks privileging a forward-looking focus that, when accompanied by a lack of critical analysis, makes only 'politically useful' links to the past.¹⁸⁸

While this critical analysis is also applicable to some extent to the local written press coverage of the CCT's conceptualisation and architectural form, in many instances the local coverage of the CCT's inauguration can be seen to represent the CCT project and its significance as inherently linked to and informed by New Caledonia's changing political context in the past, the present and the future.¹⁸⁹ There is often no clear distinction between 'the political' and 'the cultural' in the discourse published by the local written press in relation to the CCT at the time of its inauguration, and the boundaries of any such distinction when it is constructed appear highly volatile. It is

¹⁸⁵ 'Le CENTRE CULTUREL TJIBAOU – DANS VOS HORIZONS', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, 23-29/04/1998, 16-17.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 17.

¹⁸⁸ Footnote omitted, Message (2006: 23).

¹⁸⁹ See the discussion below.

consequently more difficult to conclude in such a direct manner that the local press coverage contributes to the ‘political neutralisation’ of the CCT.

It is also important to emphasise in this connection that the question remains open as to the degree to which the local (and, indeed, the international) coverage of the CCT merely reflected the nature of and emphasis in the information provided to the media by the ADCK itself. The ‘*présentation*’ of the CCT’s architecture on the CCT/ADCK website can itself be seen to emphasise the links between the CCT (through both the architectural design of its contemporary building and the *chemin kanak*) and its natural environment, and affirms that ‘*l’homme kanak*’ is ‘*étroitement lié à son environnement naturel*’.¹⁹⁰

The agency of the ADCK in relation to the conceptualisation and design of the CCT in the main article published on the 4 May by LNC is acknowledged to a greater extent than in the newspaper’s earlier coverage. This article firstly represents the CCT as ‘*l’un des joyaux de l’architecture contemporaine*’, and affirms: ‘*[i]ndéniablement, le Centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou a belle allure et Renzo Piano a signé là, l’un de ses chefs-d’œuvre.*’¹⁹¹ However, it goes on to quote the well-known passage from Jean-Marie Tjibaou in which he asserts that the return to ‘*la tradition*’ is a myth, our identity lying ahead of us, and then states:

[a]insi, *l’architecture du centre culturel est-elle le fruit d’une étroite collaboration entre l’ADCK et Renzo Piano, qui a du coup abondamment nourri son œuvre de culture kanake.*¹⁹²

On the opposite page to this article, three texts focus on these three different actors: one text discusses the award to Piano of the prestigious international architectural prize, the

¹⁹⁰ CCT/ADCK, ‘Présentation : Le Centre Culturel Tjibaou : Architecture’, 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/le-centre-culturel-tjibaou/architecture>>. See also the discussion above.

¹⁹¹ Olivier Bonetti, ‘Le dernier des grands travaux du président Mitterrand – Le Centre Tjibaou : une main tendue entre les communautés’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 04/05/1998, 6.

¹⁹² Ibid.

Pritzner;¹⁹³ another includes a brief interview with the ADCK's Director, Octave Togna;¹⁹⁴ and a third discusses the new film on Jean-Marie Tjibaou, entitled *Tjibaou, la mémoire assassinée*, to be screened at the CCT as part of the inauguration program.¹⁹⁵

The headline of the interview with Togna, in which he is quoted as stating '« [n]ous avons une obligation de qualité, par respect pour ceux qui ont financé ce projet »', introduces and foregrounds another actor: the French State. This headline is also representative of the particular focus by LNC in its coverage of the CCT published in 1998 on the question of whether the ADCK's animation of the Centre will be 'à la hauteur' of its 'world-class' architecture and facilities.¹⁹⁶ This focus underlines the primacy given to the CCT's modern 'international' architecture, Piano's agency and their unequivocal valorisation (linked at least implicitly to the involvement of the French State in the CCT project), compared to the generally secondary and potentially questionable agency and success of the ADCK (and, by extension, of Kanak people and culture as a whole) in relation to the CCT.

While the coverage of the CCT's inauguration published in this and in previous and subsequent editions of LNC does treat in some detail the 'customary' inscription of the inauguration itself,¹⁹⁷ there is no real discussion of the CCT's 'aire coutumière' and its particular significance and role as the space/element of the Centre through which the

¹⁹³ Olivier Bonetti, 'Renzo Piano couronné par le « Pritzner »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 7.

¹⁹⁴ Olivier Bonetti, 'Questions à... Octave Togna, directeur général de l'ADCK – « Nous avons une obligation de qualité, par respect pour ceux qui ont financé ce projet »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 7.

¹⁹⁵ Olivier Bonetti, '« Tjibaou, la mémoire assassinée »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 7.

¹⁹⁶ See, for example, 'Deux mois avant l'inauguration – Visite guidée au Centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/03/1998, 13; Olivier Bonetti, 'Inauguration, expositions, danse et théâtre – Le calendrier du centre culturel Tjibaou enfin dévoilé', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 15/04/1998, 7; Olivier Bonetti, 'Le dernier des grands travaux du président Mitterrand – Le Centre Tjibaou : une main tendue entre les communautés', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 6; Olivier Bonetti, 'Questions à... Octave Togna, directeur général de l'ADCK – « Nous avons une obligation de qualité, par respect pour ceux qui ont financé ce projet »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 7; Jacquotte Sampérez et al., 'Marie-Claude Tjibaou, présidente de l'ADCK – « Tenons le cap de la qualité »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 31.

¹⁹⁷ See the discussion below.

CCT's overall legitimacy is founded and continually assured from the perspective of the ADCK and its '*démarche traditionnelle dans un contexte contemporain*'.¹⁹⁸

A particularly revealing passage from the very piecemeal treatment of the CCT and its inauguration published by LCB clearly illustrates the tendency to prioritise Western 'aesthetic' values in relation to the appreciation and evaluation of the CCT project – a tendency with deeply political implications – in a number of the articles published by the local newspapers around this time. Under the heading '[t]rois cases mal placées', LCB states:

[a]u Centre Culturel Tjibaou, trois petites cases, dites coutumières, ont été construites à côté des grandes cases imaginées par l'un des plus grands architectes du monde, Renzo Piano. D'un point de vue culturel et politique, cela peut, peut-être, se justifier, mais d'un point de vue strictement architectural, c'est ce qu'on appelle une faute de goût. Les amoureux d'architecture en ont encore mal à la gorge. On aurait peut-être pu les mettre un peu plus loin de l'édifice principal : à l'entrée par exemple.¹⁹⁹

While the (unexplained) possible 'cultural and political' justifications for the *aire coutumière*'s existence in proximity to the contemporary Piano building are acknowledged, they are readily dismissed in this text. LCB discursively marginalises the Kanak 'customary' inscription and legitimation of the CCT and circumvents the core political significance and symbolism of the CCT's construction and constitution as a specifically Kanak institution and project. This text might be seen to suggest a

¹⁹⁸ One article published in the June edition of TDC does indicate that the three '*cases traditionnelles*', representing respectively '*le Sud, le Nord et les Loyauté*', constructed on the CCT's *aire coutumière* '*sont le lien entre le passé et le présent*'. However, no further explanation of this is given, and there is no indication of the particular significance of the *aire coutumière* in terms of the 'customary' inscription and legitimation of the CCT's construction on this site. This article also identifies these 'traditional' cases as facilitating the pedagogical missions of the CCT by allowing for the representation of '*la diversité architecturale traditionnelle*.' 'Le centre Tjibaou – Un immense village noyé dans la nature', *Tour de Côte*, no. 84, June 1998, 13.

¹⁹⁹ 'Trois cases mal placées', *Le Chien bleu*, no. 2, 1998, 1. Note the hierarchy established through the characterisation of the 'traditional' cases as '*petites*' and Piano's contemporary 'cases' as '*grandes*'. Note also the potential doubt thrown on the 'authenticity' or the representational legitimacy of the 'traditional' cases, '*dites coutumières*'.

persisting disregard or disdain for Kanak culture, ‘custom’ and agency, and for the politics of Kanak culture and identity engaged in and through the CCT initiative.

Coverage of the ‘customary inauguration’ in *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*

LNC includes substantially more treatment and explanation of the Kanak ‘customary’ ceremonies associated with the CCT’s inauguration on the 4 and 5 May 1998 compared to the other local papers considered in this study. On the 4 May, the edition of LNC in print on the first day of the CCT’s inauguration includes on its front page two photographs of Kanak men engaged in ‘customary’ exchanges accompanied by the headline ‘[p]remières coutumes avant l’inauguration du Centre Tjibaou’, under which is written: ‘[l]es délégations des cinq aires ont été accueillies hier par les coutumiers de l’aire Drubéa-Kapone et les représentants du clan Tjibaou ont été reçus par la tribu de La Conception’.²⁰⁰ The associated full-page article includes a relatively comprehensive textual account and explanation of the processes, ‘chemins coutumiers’ and exchanges involved in these initial ‘customary’ ceremonies on the 3 May, and is accompanied by eight photographs with relatively detailed explanatory captions.²⁰¹

In this article, the special position and role of ‘les coutumiers de l’aire Drubéa-Kapone, sur laquelle a été construit le Centre Tjibaou’, is clearly foregrounded.²⁰² The particular role of the ‘délégation d’Hoot Ma Whaap’, the ‘aire des propriétaires du nom Tjibaou’, is also explained, along with the ‘sens’ of the ‘customary’ ceremonies to take place at the CCT on the 4 May.²⁰³ These explanations are expressed in very similar terms to those published by the ADCK in *Mwà Vée*.²⁰⁴ LNC clearly indicates the primary

²⁰⁰ ‘Premières coutumes avant l’inauguration du Centre Tjibaou’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 04/05/1998, 1.

²⁰¹ Carole de Kermoisan, ‘Premières cérémonies à la veille de l’inauguration du Centre culturel Tjibaou – Les aires coutumières rassemblées’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 04/05/1998, 8.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ See the discussion in Annex 7.

function of these initial ‘customary’ ceremonies, through which, as stated in the headline, the different Kanak *aires coutumières* were to be ‘rassemblées’ in preparation for the ceremonies the following day.²⁰⁵ As well as noting that all of the ‘customary’ representatives underlined in their discourses ‘*la rareté de l’événement, qui s’est d’ailleurs traduite par l’échange de monnaies [kanak], réservé aux grandes occasions*’, LNC itself characterises the ‘customary’ transfer of the name Tjibaou as an ‘*événement historique*’.²⁰⁶ Several passages from the discourses pronounced by different Kanak ‘*coutumiers*’ are also directly reproduced in this article.

In a short interview with Togna in his capacity as Director of the ADCK published in the same edition, the ‘customary’ inscription of the CCT project and its central importance from the ADCK’s perspective is highlighted. Thus, in response to LNC’s comment ‘*[t]out au long de la construction du centre, vous vous êtes montré préoccupé par le respect des règles coutumières*’, Togna is quoted as responding:

[s]i on a la prétention de dire que l’on se préoccupe de culture kanake, on ne peut être en dehors des structures coutumières. C’est la racine de notre culture. Elle est incontournable.²⁰⁷

In LNC’s edition dated the 5 May, a number of the articles and images published in the nine-page special supplement on the CCT’s inauguration treat the Kanak ‘customary’

²⁰⁵ The article thus explains the ‘*sens des cérémonies qui auront lieu cet après-midi à Tina*’ as follows: ‘*les coutumiers de tout le Territoire ont pris tour à tour place aux côtés de l’aire qui comprend Nouméa, afin de se présenter cet après-midi unis.*’ It also affirms in this connection: ‘*[c]et après-midi, les propriétaires du nom que porte le centre culturel (les Hoot Ma Whaap) vont en faire don aux autorités coutumières de l’aire Drubea-Kapone. Les autres grandes chefferies accueillies hier à Nouville, assisteront à cet événement historique. Ainsi, l’ensemble des aires coutumières reconnaîtra le Centre culturel Tjibaou.*’ Carole de Kermoyan, ‘Premières cérémonies à la veille de l’inauguration du Centre culturel Tjibaou – Les aires coutumières rassemblées’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 04/05/1998, 8. The coverage of the inauguration published in the next edition also noted that: ‘*[L]es représentants de toutes les grandes chefferies du Territoire étaient assis aux côtés des coutumiers de Djubéa-Kapone pour l’événement, symbolisant la cohésion des aires*’: Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Des coutumiers aux chefs d’Etat – Un accueil au son des toutoutes’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 05/05/1998, 27.

²⁰⁶ Carole de Kermoyan, ‘Premières cérémonies à la veille de l’inauguration du Centre culturel Tjibaou – Les aires coutumières rassemblées’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 04/05/1998, 8.

²⁰⁷ Olivier Bonetti, ‘Questions à... Octave Togna, directeur général de l’ADCK – « Nous avons une obligation de qualité, par respect pour ceux qui ont financé ce projet »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 04/05/1998, 7.

ceremonies performed on the 4 May. Some of this treatment, including brief explanations of the signification of these ceremonies as well as short quotations from the discourses pronounced by the principal Kanak ‘*coutumiers*’ involved, appears in the newspaper’s main article on the inauguration, which synthesises its coverage of all aspects of the inauguration event.²⁰⁸ The ‘customary’ ceremonies are also the primary focus of a two-page spread, dominated by 14 colour photographs with accompanying explanatory captions.²⁰⁹ The unique and historic character of the ‘customary’ ceremonies performed during the 4 May inauguration, described as ‘*un moment coutumier qui restera dans la mémoire*’, is foregrounded in this coverage.²¹⁰ Identified as ‘*l’aboutissement de deux années de démarches auprès des coutumiers de tout le territoire*’, these ceremonies and associated discourses are reported by LNC to have been ‘*à la fois un regard sur le passé et une envie de construire l’avenir*.’²¹¹

The caption to one of the photographs in the two-page spread, showing the crowd of ‘*[p]as moins de mille invités*’ in attendance for the inauguration, affirms: ‘*[t]out le monde était unanime pour souligner l’aspect authentique de la coutume*’.²¹² As suggested by this caption, the opposition between ‘authenticity’ and ‘inauthenticity’ is still largely operative in LNC’s coverage of the CCT’s inauguration. Nevertheless, the category of ‘authenticity’ appears to have been constructed in very broad terms by the newspaper, so that, in keeping with Tjibaou’s perspective regarding ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ which had been appropriated as the CCT/ADCK’s own guiding philosophy,

²⁰⁸ See particularly Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Pour la première fois, un nom a été donné coutumièrement à un bâtiment avec l’approbation de toutes les grandes chefferies – Une page d’histoire de la coutume et de la politique du pays’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 05/05/1998, 26.

²⁰⁹ Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Les Hoot Ma Waap ont fait trembler les terres Djubea Kapone’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 05/05/1998, 28-29.

²¹⁰ See Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Pour la première fois, un nom a été donné coutumièrement à un bâtiment avec l’approbation de toutes les grandes chefferies – Une page d’histoire de la coutume et de la politique du pays’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 05/05/1998, 26; Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Les Hoot Ma Waap ont fait trembler les terres Djubea Kapone’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 05/05/1998, 28.

²¹¹ Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Pour la première fois, un nom a été donné coutumièrement à un bâtiment avec l’approbation de toutes les grandes chefferies – Une page d’histoire de la coutume et de la politique du pays’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 05/05/1998, 26.

²¹² Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Les Hoot Ma Waap ont fait trembler les terres Djubea Kapone’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 05/05/1998, 29.

all of the ‘customary’ exchanges and the various Kanak dance and choral performances which also took place throughout the day were implicitly represented as ‘authentic’, regardless of their incorporation of more ‘contemporary’ influences and elements.²¹³ On the other hand, tensions can still be seen to exist in the operation of such categories of ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ in LNC’s discourse, as illustrated by the reference to ‘*la plus pure tradition mélanésienne*’ in another caption.²¹⁴

Kanak culture, identity and ‘authenticity’ are also constructed as radically different to Western culture, identity and ‘authenticity’ by LNC at various points in its coverage of the inauguration. Thus, one caption accompanying an image of a Kanak man in apparently ‘traditional’ dress located at the entrance to the *chemin kanak* (referred to by the newspaper as the ‘*chemin coutumier*’), which was followed by the invitees during the inauguration to arrive at the CCT’s contemporary building, states under the heading ‘*[l]e sifflement des esprits*’:

[à] l’entrée du chemin coutumier, ce vieil homme fait siffler un anneau sur une corde. C’est l’entrée dans un monde étrange, propre aux Kanaks. Et pour mieux le faire partager, le faire comprendre aux blancs, ils ouvriront leur cœur et leur mémoire au sein du Centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou.²¹⁵

Another caption relating to the *chemin kanak*, printed under the subheading ‘*[s]ur le chemin coutumier*’, affirms:

²¹³ For example, the caption one photograph of a group of Kanak women and men dressed in matching uniforms – mission dresses or shirts with blue jeans, accompanied by vests and floral-wreath headdresses – published under the heading ‘*[l]es chorales de Dieu*’ runs: ‘*[l]es chorales ont empli l’air et le village mélanésien de la presque île de Tina à plusieurs reprises lundi après-midi. Chorales religieuses ou non, elles sont partie intégrante de la culture et de l’âme du pays*’: *ibid.*

²¹⁴ This caption, relating to the ‘traditional’ Kanak food served towards the end of the inauguration, runs: ‘*[d]ans la plus pure tradition mélanésienne le public a envahi les espaces vides pour s’y asseoir et déguster les plats proposés.*’ Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Un cocktail à base de produits locaux’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 32. This caption might be seen to recall and reinforce the identification of Kanak people with the natural environment, discussed above.

²¹⁵ Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Les Hoot Ma Waap ont fait trembler les terres Djubea Kapone’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 28.

[v]éritable chemin initiatique du sacré, le sentier qui conduit au Centre culturel à travers une végétation propre aux alentours des tribus, a été emprunté par les officiels. C'était un véritable son et lumière parfaitement orchestré qui a séduit tous ceux qui ont eu la chance de le voir.²¹⁶

Not only is such a performance for an external (non-Kanak) audience unproblematically aligned with and, indeed, discursively assimilated to Kanak 'culture' and 'authenticity', it is here aligned with and assimilated to Kanak 'custom' and '*le sacré*'.

As suggested by the references to the CCT's *chemin kanak* as the '*chemin coutumier*' in these captions, Kanak 'culture' and Kanak 'custom' are frequently constructed as synonymous in LNC's coverage of the inauguration. The coverage of the 'cultural' performances (including dance, music and the animation of the *chemin kanak*) during the event primarily takes the form of photographs with explanatory captions that are interspersed with the photographs and captions relating to the Kanak 'customary' ceremonies in the two-page spread discussed above.²¹⁷

The significance of this discursive equivalence constructed between Kanak 'culture' and Kanak 'custom' lies in the potentially resulting implicit distinction between 'custom' and 'the political'. Such a distinction is, moreover, apparent in the main article

²¹⁶ Ibid. The walk from the *aire coutumière* along the *chemin kanak* to the Piano building's main entrance by representatives of the ADCK, accompanied by the main political representatives and other invitees in attendance, for the final stage of the 'customary inauguration' was led by a Kanak dance group forming a human '*pirogue*' to guide this 'voyage'. Apparently for the benefit of the political representatives and invitees (rather than the ADCK or the Kanak 'customary' authorities), as well as for the benefit of the media coverage of the event, the *chemin kanak* was animated by dancers, lighting and sound. The program given to attendees itself states: '[a]u cours de ce chemin, peut-être verrez-vous les esprits gardiens des lieux apparaître pour souhaiter la bienvenue aux vivants et leur donner la place qui leur revient en ces nouveaux lieux de la vie.' Del Rio (1998a).

²¹⁷ See Jacquotte Sampérez et al., 'Les Hoot Ma Waap ont fait trembler les terres Djubea Kapone', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 28-29. Note that the headline and introductory text for this two-page spread only concern the CCT's 'customary inauguration'. The equivalence constructed between Kanak 'culture' and 'custom' is also apparent in the caption to one of the photographs showing the Kanak 'customary' exchanges. In the foreground of this photograph, a Kanak child sits with his back to the ceremony. The caption states: '[c]e jeune danseur de Hoot Ma Waap a déjà tant vu de fois la coutume faite dans sa région natale de Hienghène (« la culture kanake n'est pas un vêtement de fête qu'on ôte dans la vie de tous les jours », dira le Premier ministre Lionel Jospin), qu'il tourne le dos à celle, historique, du don du nom des Tjibaou, au Centre culturel[.]'

published on the 5 May by LNC in its coverage of the inauguration. In its discussion of the 'customary' processes and exchanges associated with the inauguration, this article reports that:

*tous les coutumiers [...] ont souligné qu'il ne s'agissait pas d'une conclusion, mais d'un point de départ. « Construisons ensemble la case de Calédonie, » a dit le représentant de l'aire Djubéa Kapone lorsqu'il a présenté aux délégations locales les trois maisons de Mwakaa, l'espace coutumier du centre.*²¹⁸

The discourse of this 'coutumier' can be read as highly political in character, particularly given his entreaty (significantly addressed to the Kanak 'customary' representatives from throughout the archipelago) to construct the country as a unified socio-political entity – as indicated by the use of the metaphor of the Kanak *case* – together. However, the political character of this discourse is not foregrounded or acknowledged by the newspaper. Indeed, at a later point in this article the newspaper affirms that the inauguration '*a bien évidemment eu aussi une dimension politique, dix ans après les accords de Matignon*', a statement followed by discussion of the references made to Tjibaou and Yeiwéné and to the speeches made by the political representatives during the inauguration. In this manner, the the discourse of the 'coutumier' representing the '*aire Djubéa Kapone*' treated earlier in this article is implicitly constructed as not being political in nature.

As had been the case in LNC's coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*, 23 years earlier, Kanak 'custom', associated predominantly with 'culture', is effectively disqualified as a 'political' mode of action and interaction in the daily newspaper's discourse, and is consequently precluded from having any significant broader, 'political' implications. In this manner, the deeply political significance of the Kanak 'customary' inscription of the CCT and its inauguration, perhaps especially important if the CCT is understood as

²¹⁸ Jacquotte Sampérez et al., 'Pour la première fois, un nom a été donné coutumièrement à un bâtiment avec l'approbation de toutes les grandes chefferies – Une page d'histoire de la coutume et de la politique du pays', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 26.

a Kanak nationalist project, is effectively neutralised in LNC's coverage.²¹⁹ Thus, while the introductory text to the two-page spread relating to the CCT's 'customary inauguration' can be seen to construct the Kanak 'customary' actors as the central agents of the CCT's inauguration,²²⁰ the potential broader political implications of this agency and its exercise (particularly relating to questions of sovereignty in New Caledonia) are discursively foreclosed.

Moreover, this acknowledgement of the centrality of Kanak 'customary' agency in relation to the CCT's inauguration is counteracted by the predominant emphasis placed by LNC on the political inscription of the event, particularly associated with the presence and role of political representatives such as the French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin.

The relative importance attributed by the local written press to the involvement and role of the Kanak 'customary' representatives compared to the political representatives in the CCT's inauguration

LNC's coverage of the CCT's inauguration was itself largely incorporated into its coverage of the New Caledonian visit of Lionel Jospin (along with the other national political representatives) for this occasion and for the official signing of the Noumea Accord. On the 4 May, the front-page headline and photographs relating to the preliminary 'customary' ceremonies associated with the CCT's 'customary inauguration' were overshadowed by the headline, image and texts relating to Lionel

²¹⁹ However, as can be seen from the discussion below of the inauguration's coverage published by LNC, the potential Kanak nationalist orientation and framing of the CCT project was still perpetuated through its resonance with the recognition and restitution of 'Kanak identity' in the discursive context of the Noumea Accord.

²²⁰ This text runs: '[a]u terme d'une coutume forte faite par une delegation de l'aire Hoot Ma Waap (Nord) aux coutumiers du Sud et en particulier de l'aire Djubea Kapone, le nom Tjibaou a été remis aux bâtiments du Centre culturel. Et c'est grâce au sol martelé par les porteurs du nom, grâce aux manous déployés, aux ignames offertes et à la monnaie kanake acceptée par les maîtres de la terre, que l'ADCK a pu, depuis ce lundi 4 mai 1998, soit neuf ans après la mort de Jean-Marie Tjibaou, prendre possession des lieux.' Jacquotte Sampérez et al., 'Les Hoot Ma Waap ont fait trembler les terres Djubea Kapone', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 28.

Jospin's visit and the Noumea Accord agreement.²²¹ On page three of this edition, a cartoon depicts Jospin cutting a 'tricolore' ribbon in front of the CCT (represented by three of Piano's 'cases' drawn with bow-ties and eyes) with the caption: '*LE GESTE FORT D'OUVERTURE AUJOURD'HUI...*'.²²² In this image, Jospin is represented as the key actor of the CCT's inauguration. Similarly, in the main article on the inauguration printed in this edition (which is positioned after the coverage of Jospin and his visit), one of the lead dot-points at the beginning of the article states that the CCT '*sera inauguré par le Premier ministre, vingt-quatre heures avant la signature officielle des accords de Nouméa.*'²²³ The article printed on the preliminary 'customary' ceremonies is positioned at the very end of the coverage of Jospin's visit and the CCT's inauguration in this edition.²²⁴

While the front page of the edition dated 5 May is dominated by two photographs from the inauguration, the main headline and accompanying text foreground Jospin's presence and the signing of the Noumea Accord.²²⁵ Moreover, Jospin is again accredited with having inaugurated the CCT.²²⁶ On the front page of the special supplement on the inauguration included in this edition, the most prominent text after the supplement's heading is a quotation attributed to Jospin.²²⁷ While the 'customary' ceremonies are given prominence through the headline of the main article on the inauguration published in this supplement, the same quotation from Jospin is the first direct citation to appear in the article's text, appearing before the quotations from the discourses pronounced by the

²²¹ 'Lionel Jospin : "L'accord de Nouméa est solide"', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 1.

²²² Gielbé, 'LE GESTE FORT D'OUVERTURE AUJOURD'HUI...', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 3.

²²³ Olivier Bonetti, 'Le dernier des grands travaux du président Mitterrand – Le Centre Tjibaou : une main tendue entre les communautés', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 6.

²²⁴ Carole de Kermoysan, 'Premières cérémonies à la veille de l'inauguration du Centre culturel Tjibaou – Les aires coutumières rassemblées', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 8.

²²⁵ The headline runs: '*Jospin au pays de l'Accord*'. The accompanying text states: '[a]rrivé hier, le Premier ministre scellera aujourd'hui les accords de Nouméa. Inaugurant le Centre Tjibaou, il a appelé au « dialogue des cultures ».' '*Jospin au pays de l'Accord*', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 1.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ 'Le Centre Tjibaou inauguré', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 25.

Kanak ‘customary’ representatives during the inauguration.²²⁸ Moreover, while there are only a few direct quotations from these ‘customary’ representatives included in the newspaper’s special supplement, almost two full pages are devoted to the reproduction of extracts from the speeches made by the political representatives of the signatories to the Matignon and Noumea Accords – Lionel Jospin, Jacques Lafleur and Rock Wamytan.²²⁹

This tendency to prioritise and foreground the involvement and role of the political representatives (especially Jospin) in the CCT’s inauguration over that of the Kanak ‘customary’ representatives is even more pronounced in the coverage of the event published by TDC and LNH, particularly by reason of the very minimal treatment of the CCT’s ‘customary inauguration’ published by these papers. A similar tendency is also apparent in LCB.

One striking example in the latter publication is a ‘humourous’ cartoon included in the first edition published after the inauguration. This cartoon, entitled ‘[i]nauigation du centre culturel Tjibaou’, depicts Jospin reclining in a chair, exhausted, in front of a Kanak man in a grass skirt dancing and surrounded by ‘Hou !’, ‘Hou !’, with the CCT in the background. Jospin’s thought bubble runs: ‘FUM!!.. LA NÉGOTIATION, C’ÉTAIT DÉJÀ LONG... ...MAIS LA COUTUME ALORS LA [sic]; C’EST CARRÉMENT INTERMINABLE...’²³⁰ Only Jospin is given a voice in this cartoon. Kanak ‘custom’ is effectively represented as a ‘primitive’, speechless (and politically meaningless and insignificant) dance. As in the discourse of LNC, Kanak ‘custom’ is here reduced to ‘culture’, but in a more extreme manner, infused with connotations of Kanak (and

²²⁸ Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Pour la première fois, un nom a été donné coutumièrement à un bâtiment avec l’approbation de toutes les grandes chefferies – Une page d’histoire de la coutume et de la politique du pays’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 26.

²²⁹ Note that in the order in which these extracts were published, Lionel Jospin was given the most prominence, despite having spoken last during the event. A shorter extract from Marie-Claude Tjibaou’s speech (delivered as the President of the ADCK) is also included at the end of these two pages. Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Des discours en hommage à la mémoire de Jean-Marie Tjibaou et qui soulignent l’œuvre exceptionnelle – Un moyen de construire la paix’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 30-31.

²³⁰ ‘Inauguration du centre culturel Tjibaou’, *Le Chien bleu*, no. 2, 1998, 2.

potentially also New Caledonian) ‘primitivism’ and irrelevance from a metropolitan perspective.

In contrast, CLL can be seen to prioritise and foreground the CCT’s ‘customary inauguration’, which constitutes the major focus of its coverage of the event, published in one two-page article headlined: ‘*UN GRAND MOMENT DE COUTUME*’.²³¹ The lead paragraph to this article, printed in bold, affirms that:

*[u]ne grande page de la tradition kanake a été écrite le 4 mai dernier lors de la cérémonie d’inauguration du Centre Culturel dont les bâtiments ont reçu coutumièrement le nom de Tjibaou.*²³²

While the presence of national, local and international political representatives, and the speeches made by Jospin, Lafleur and Wamytan, are noted in the text, primary emphasis is given in this article to the ‘customary’ ceremonies associated with the CCT’s inauguration and Kanak agency is consequently foregrounded.²³³ Although Kanak ‘custom’ is not reduced to ‘culture’ in this article, its political character and potential broader implications are not explicitly identified as such.²³⁴

Coverage of the ‘customary’ *accueil* to the CCT of the Pacific delegations

Very little attention is paid to the second day of the CCT’s inauguration on the 5 May in the local written press. LNC is the only paper to cover this topic and its treatment is

²³¹ ‘UN GRAND MOMENT DE COUTUME – L’inauguration du Centre Culturel Tjibaou’, *Construire les Loyautés*, no. 58, May 1998, 30-31.

²³² Ibid., 31.

²³³ Nevertheless, these ceremonies are described in broadly similar terms to those used by LNC –CLL states: ‘[a]u terme d’une coutume très forte présentée par l’aire Hoot Ma Waap aux coutumiers de l’aire Djubéa Kapone, le nom Tjibaou a été remis aux bâtiments du centre Culturel. Ainsi, les paroles des porteurs du nom, les manous déployés, les ignames offertes et la monnaie kanake échangée ont permis que les clans du Sud autorise enfin l’ADCK à prendre possession des lieux, ce lundi 4 mai 1998, soit neuf ans exactement après la mort de Jean-Marie Tjibaou’: *ibid.* See Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Les Hoot Ma Waap ont fait trembler les terres Djubea Kapone’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 28.

²³⁴ On the other hand, it is arguable that the primarily Kanak readership of this publication would presumably understand Kanak ‘custom’ as inherently political, at least in terms of inter-Kanak action/interaction.

restricted to one page, primarily composed of seven black and white photographs with explanatory captions.²³⁵ The major focus of this edition of the newspaper is rather the official signing of the Noumea Accord and Jospin's activities during the last day of his New Caledonian visit. The headline to the page relating to the second day of the CCT's inauguration (which appears after the coverage of the Noumea Accord and Jospin's visit) foregrounds the 'customary' ceremonies held during the day: '[a]u son des conques – Dernières cérémonies coutumières au Centre culturel'.²³⁶ In very similar terms to those used in the inauguration program given to attendees, the lead paragraph introducing the images presented on the page states:

[e]n présence des autorités coutumières, l'Agence pour le développement de la culture kanake, qui est désormais chez elle au Centre Culturel Tjibaou, a accueilli les délégations du Pacifique.²³⁷

Very little further information, explanation or commentary is provided in relation to the 'customary' *accueil* of these foreign, Pacific delegations.²³⁸ There is certainly no indication of the potential political implications and signification of the collective Kanak 'customary' *accueil* of political representatives from foreign countries, particularly in light of the relationships between 'customary' *accueil* and questions of sovereignty.

In contrast, the newspaper clearly foregrounds the political nature and implications of the official meetings held on the 4 May (prior to the CCT's inauguration) between Jospin and a number of the same foreign political representatives²³⁹ in its coverage of

²³⁵ 'Au son des conques – Dernières cérémonies coutumières au Centre culturel', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 06/05/1998, 9.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid. See also del Rio (1998a).

²³⁸ Note that one caption also refers to the inter-Kanak 'customary' exchanges of farewell at the end of the 5 May. Under the heading '[d]'une coutume à l'autre', it states: '[d]ans l'après-midi, le cérémonial s'est poursuivi par les coutumes d'au revoir. Les coutumiers de Djubea-Kapone ont remercié les sept autres aires qui sont retournées chez elles.' 'Au son des conques – Dernières cérémonies coutumières au Centre culturel', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 06/05/1998, 9.

²³⁹ Jospin met the representatives from Australia, New Zealand, Cook Islands and Vanuatu.

Jospin's visit in the previous edition.²⁴⁰ The lead paragraph to the article reporting on these meetings unambiguously identifies the agenda as having been: '*le rôle de la France dans le Pacifique et l'avenir de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.*'²⁴¹ This article is comprised of direct quotations from the relevant Pacific political representatives (accompanied by their photographs), in which the majority express a favourable position in relation to the Noumea Accord and in relation to France's continued (and potentially even strengthened) involvement and presence in the Pacific region.²⁴²

Coverage of Kanak division and contestation regarding the CCT project and inauguration

According to Dussy, the negotiations with the key Kanak 'protagonists' in the lead-up to the CCT's inauguration were largely overlooked '*du côté des Européens*' and remain the '*sujet le plus souvent occulté*', despite the preponderant importance of these issues '*du côté des Kanak*'.²⁴³ There is certainly no treatment in the local written press of the highly delicate and important negotiations conducted by the ADCK with the rival Kanak groups claiming 'customary' authority over the Noumea area (relating to the construction and inauguration of the CCT) or with the various groups in the north of the *Grande Terre* (relating to the transfer of the name Tjibaou to the Centre) during the period leading up to the CCT's installation on the site and its official inauguration.²⁴⁴ Such inter-Kanak division, contestation and conflict are also occluded in the contemporaneous local written press-coverage of the inauguration itself. As can be seen from the above discussion of the coverage published by LNC and CLL of the Kanak 'customary' ceremonies associated with the CCT's inauguration, this coverage

²⁴⁰ Michaël Guillon, 'Lionel Jospin avec les délégations du Pacifique', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 5.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² See *ibid.*

²⁴³ Dussy (2003: 5).

²⁴⁴ These negotiations are discussed in Annex 7.

generally posits and affirms the (seemingly unproblematic and unqualified) unity and consensus amongst Kanak people and their ‘customary’ representatives from throughout the archipelago in relation to the CCT project and the Centre’s inauguration.

One of the primary sources of information readily available to and used by the local print media in its coverage of the CCT and its inauguration was the ADCK itself. Given that CCT/ADCK publications also appear to generally occlude the more difficult aspects of the ‘*démarche traditionnelle*’ engaged, and do not detail the inter-Kanak divisions, rivalries and conflicts that were at play, it seems unlikely that any information on this subject was provided by the ADCK to the media.

The ADCK’s apparent decision not to mediatise such topics may have had various motivations. This decision could be seen to resonate with the comments made by Lucienne Moréo-cee, a prominent *Radio Djido* journalist,²⁴⁵ in an interview in 2002 in justifying her decision not to report on a series of communiqués circulated by two Kanak groups disputing their respective ‘clanic’ legitimacy. Moréo-cee is quoted as stating:

[j]’ai lu les communiqués et je leur ai dit maintenant c’est fini. Vous allez vous discuter, vous les clans, dans la case. C’est pas la peine d’emmener ça sur la voie publique. Moi j’ai pas à faire le scoop. Il faut voir comme ça le journalisme à la kanak. Il faut pas chercher le scoop. Il faut aider un peu à renouer le dialogue.²⁴⁶

Moreover, as noted by Naepels in his discussion of the ‘traditional’ Kanak mode of *accueil* in the region of Houaïlou, ‘silence’ in the present (particularly in public, ‘customary’ discourses) in relation to past socio-political conflicts, positions, relations and configurations is synonymous with ‘respect’.²⁴⁷ ‘Consensus’, rather than division, is generally posited and affirmed in public ‘customary’ discourse.

²⁴⁵ Note that Moréo-cee was also involved in the *Mwā Kā* initiative in 2003 – see Chapter Three.

²⁴⁶ Cited in Briffa (2002: 73).

²⁴⁷ Naepels (1998: 204-205).

It appears likely that the ADCK's decision not to draw attention in the broader public domain to inter-Kanak 'customary' divisions and disputes (such as those concerning authority over and 'ownership' of the Noumea area) also stemmed from the ADCK's expressed primary intention to constitute the CCT as a cultural centre representing, and legitimated by and in the eyes of, the Kanak people as a whole. Publicly acknowledging or detailing the difficulties, divisions and conflict within the Kanak community in relation to the CCT project would have detracted from the image of Kanak unity and Kanak 'customary' and popular consensus in relation to the CCT and its inauguration predominantly discursively projected by the ADCK. As in the case of Jean-Marie Tjibaou's selective appropriation and reconstruction of two specific versions of the *Paicî* foundational myth relating to the figure of *Kanaké* so as to create a unifying 'héros d'un mythe de portée nationale' in the *Mélanésie 2000* context,²⁴⁸ the ADCK can be seen to have presented a 'sanitised' official version of its '*démarche traditionnelle dans un contexte contemporain*' to the broader public.²⁴⁹

However, in two articles published by LNC in May 1998 after the inauguration, critical comments are made by different Kanak politicians in relation to the purported 'customary' inscription of the CCT's inauguration. The first of these articles relates primarily to the creation of a new political party, formed by the '*dissidents du Palika*' who were involved in the *Comité de coordination des indépendantistes*, announced at a press conference by leaders of this group, including Raphaël Mapou.²⁵⁰ The caption to an accompanying photograph states that during this press conference, Mapou: '*a fait part de ses interrogations sur la façon d'aborder la coutume lors des cérémonies*

²⁴⁸ Bensa (1995a: 295).

²⁴⁹ Bensa maintains that '*les épisodes trop riches en toponymes, ou qui évoque l'inceste ou la guerre sont laissés de côté*' in Tjibaou's construction of the 'national' foundation myth centred on the figure of *Kanaké*, as the symbol of the Kanak people as a unified collective entity with a legitimate claim to political independence and sovereignty over the New Caledonian archipelago: *ibid.*, 296.

²⁵⁰ 'Un nouveau parti indépendantiste sera créé le 6 juin – Les dissidents du Palika forment le groupe « Tépeû 1998 »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/05/1998, 9. See also the discussion relating to the CCI in Brown (1998: 128). Note also that Raphaël Mapou was later involved in the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative, as discussed in Chapter Three.

d'inauguration du Centre culturel Tjibaou.²⁵¹ These questions are detailed further in an associated shorter article, headed: '[i]naustration du Centre culturel Tjibaou : « Il fallait distinguer la fête de la cérémonie coutumière »'.²⁵² The text runs:

« [I]’accueil traditionnel kanak exigeât que les délégations océaniques soient reçues avant le cérémonial d’inauguration », a déclare hier Raphaël Mapou qui a fait part [...] de certaines réactions à propos des cérémonies liées à l’inauguration du Centre culturel Tjibaou. « Beaucoup s’interrogent encore sur certains gestes coutumiers, comme le manou de guerre, ou sur le sens de la monnaie donnée par les coutumiers du Sud pour légitimer coutumièrement la direction de l’ADCK », a-t-il ajouté. Les dissidents du Palika estiment qu’il y a eu « trop de folklore » et ont appelé au respect de la tradition et des entités coutumières kanakes.²⁵³

Some similar criticisms were also expressed by the Kanak RPCR Senator Simon Loueckhote in an interview with LNC published two days later.²⁵⁴ Under the heading ‘“[I]e folklore du Centre Tjibaou”’, the paper reports:

[I]e sénateur Loueckhote est “étonné et déçu” par la façon dont les cérémonies d’inauguration du centre Tjibaou se sont passées. “Moi, Mélanésien, je suis profondément choqué par tout ce folklore. [...]”. Il indique que les cérémonies “n’ont été qu’une chorégraphie écrite pour une partie de la population. Le RPCR en a été exclu et même certains mélanésiens indépendantistes. Certains coutumiers qui auraient du être là ne l’étaient pas”. Sur le sens des cérémonies le sénateur précise

²⁵¹ ‘Un nouveau parti indépendantiste sera créé le 6 juin – Les dissidents du Palika forment le groupe « Tépeû 1998 »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/05/1998, 9.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ ‘Inauguration du Centre culturel Tjibaou : « Il fallait distinguer la fête de la cérémonie coutumière »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/05/1998, 9.

²⁵⁴ ‘ENTRETIEN – Accords de Nouméa – Le sénateur Loueckhote : « Une chance extraordinaire pour les Mélanésiens »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 15/05/1998, 4; “Le folklore du Centre Tjibaou”, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 15/05/1998, 4.

*“nous n’avons assisté qu’au don du nom du nord au sud. La facilité a conduit à adopter des objets qui ont été apportés par d’autres civilisations et on n’a pas utilisé ce qui est ancré en nous”[.]*²⁵⁵

As in Mapou’s discourse, the legitimacy and ‘authenticity’ of the ‘customary’ inscription of the CCT’s inauguration is challenged by Loueckhote and characterised rather as (‘inauthentic’, ‘superficial’ and ‘staged’) ‘folklore’. Loueckhote also challenges the purportedly inclusive nature of the inauguration, positing rather its partisan and exclusionary character.

Moreover, Loueckhote is also quoted as having stated:

*[e]t je voudrais souligner qu’il n’y a pas eu d’inauguration du centre. Pas de drapeau français. Pas de ruban tricolore coupé. Pour une affaire qui coute tout de même sept milliards au contribuable français[.]*²⁵⁶

The legitimacy of the ‘inauguration’ outside the ‘standard’ or ‘traditional’ (Western, French) mode of inaugurating a public building and institution such as the CCT within the context of the French Republic is thus rejected by Loueckhote, whose defence of the (clearly French nationalist) inscription of such public events can be seen to reflect Loueckhote’s ‘loyalist’ political orientation and engagement.²⁵⁷ The inauguration is consequently posited as having been illegitimate from the perspective of Kanak ‘custom’ and by reason of the exclusion of some Kanak people, as well as from the perspective of French ‘tradition’ and French (nationalist) modes of public ceremony and ritual.

²⁵⁵ “Le folklore du Centre Tjibaou”, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 15/05/1998, 4. Loueckhote’s self-identification as ‘Mélansien’, rather than ‘Kanak’ can be seen to reflect his political position in opposition to Kanak claims for independence.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ It might be noted that the official inauguration in June 1998 by the RPCR Mayor of Noumea, Jean Lèques, of the new street leading to the CCT as the ‘rue des Accords de Matignon’ (constructed by the Municipality of Noumea) did involve the unveiling of the street sign from behind a ‘traditional’ ‘voile tricolore’. LNC states in its coverage of this event that Lèques ‘a souligné la valeur symbolique de ce choix [de nom] effectué par le conseil municipal. « Ainsi baptisée, la rue rappelle le lien étroit entre les Accords de Matignon et le Centre culturel »’: ‘Elle mène à l’Amicale vietnamienne, au golf de Tina et au Centre culturel Tjibaou – LA « RUE DES ACCORDS DE MATIGNON » INAUGURÉE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 16/06/1998, 8.

Beyond these two instances, LNC does not mention or discuss the inter-Kanak division, contestation and conflict in relation to the CCT project in its contemporaneous coverage of the 1998 inauguration. It is worth comparing this and the local print-media's coverage of the inauguration with the analysis advanced by other authors in relation to the media's coverage of inter-Kanak conflict and violence in different contexts and under rubrics other than that of 'Culture'.

Possible anti-Kanak racism in the coverage of inter-Kanak conflict and violence outside the 'Culture' rubric – some limitations of the present study

Briffa identifies the absence of racist articles and an increase in the coverage of certain, previously largely ignored 'typically Kanak subjects' (resulting in an increase in the relative exposure given to certain aspects of Kanak culture) as being among the changes apparent in the discourse of LNC subsequent to the conclusion of the Matignon Accords agreement in 1988.²⁵⁸ Indeed, the extensive coverage in the local media of the inauguration of the CCT itself (particularly including RFO's televising of the event) is identified by Briffa as the '*point d'orgue*' of this (posited) new recognition and increased treatment of Kanak culture in the local media subsequent to the Matignon Accords, from which time, '*peu à peu, la culture kanak entre dans l'ensemble des foyers calédoniens par la presse écrite, la radio et la télé.*'²⁵⁹

However, Briffa's identification of both of these changes can be directly contrasted to the analysis of Chanter, who maintains specifically in relation to LNC that, despite the changes apparent most notably in the newspaper's political coverage, the changes in the discourse of the paper are overall 'more of form than of substance.'²⁶⁰ In particular, Chanter affirms the persistence of anti-Kanak racism (if in a less overt and explicit form) in the changing discourse of LNC and contends that this racism is apparent

²⁵⁸ Briffa (2002: 39, 72-73).

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 72-73.

²⁶⁰ Chanter (2002: 19).

precisely in the newspaper's treatment of Kanak culture, but in the context of its reports on certain conflicts within Kanak communities between Kanak 'customary' and political authorities in relation to economic development and in its reporting on violent crime (such as rape and violence against women), which is dominated by coverage of incidents involving Kanak protagonists.²⁶¹ Indeed, Chanter contends that the discourses identifiable in LNC's coverage of these subjects in the 1990s:

attest to the profound racism that prevails in significant and influential sections of the non-Kanak community in new Caledonia – a racism directed at the very cultural constitution of the indigenous peoples of this country.²⁶²

Chanter does acknowledge the existence of other, more 'positive' discourses in LNC on Kanak culture (for example in relation to what are identified as its 'folkloric' aspects and manifestations).²⁶³ Nevertheless, her analysis of the newspaper's treatment of Kanak culture under rubrics of local 'news' other than that devoted specifically to 'Culture' itself (under which the 'cultural' events studied in this thesis are themselves broadly placed in the discursive context of the newspaper) provides an important illustration of the very partial nature of the present study of local print-media discourse and the potential resulting limitations of this study in drawing any broad conclusions relating to the discursive representation of Kanak culture and identity in the local written press overall.²⁶⁴ For example, while LNC's coverage of the CCT's inauguration in May 1998 does not immediately appear to manifest a discourse of anti-Kanak racism as such, this is not to say that anti-Kanak racism is absent from the newspaper's treatment of Kanak culture and identity in other contexts and in relation to other 'news' items, particularly those treated by the paper in sections outside the rubric of 'Culture'.

²⁶¹ Chanter (2002).

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 33-34.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

²⁶⁴ Recall also the general discussion of this point in the Introduction.

The negotiation of the Noumea Accord and the inauguration's political context

While the CCT's inauguration was treated in many respects by LNC as a 'cultural' event, its 'political' symbolism and inscription was also foregrounded and its coverage intertwined with that of 'political' topics such as the New Caledonian visit of the French Prime Minister and the official signing of the Noumea Accord. Before turning to consider the discursive inscription of the CCT, its inauguration and their coverage in the local written press in the new political context heralded by the conclusion of the Noumea Accord, it is useful to briefly trace the links between the negotiation of that agreement and the CCT in the preceding period.

The possibility of a consensual agreement as an alternative to the referendum on independence programmed for the end of the Matignon Accords in 1998 was raised publicly as early as 1991 by Lafleur. However, the negotiations which gave rise to the Noumea Accord agreement only commenced in earnest subsequent to the resolution of the '*préalable minier*' with the signing of the Bercy Agreements on the 1 February 1998. Writing in relation to the timetable and context of the political negotiations which took place from that time, Brown maintains that the inauguration of the CCT, programmed for May, itself became a significant factor. Brown affirms:

[t]here was hope that its inauguration would be a sign of reconciliation and a gesture towards the future ideally given over to more cultural development than to political infighting. Hence, there was a symbolic moment to be seized to indicate the present's transcendence of the bloody past, which had culminated in Tjibaou's own assassination. If the constitutional future could be worked out through negotiation prior to the planned opening of the Centre, it could appear to be a cultural home open to all Caledonians – and indeed, beyond –, from its Melanesian

base, as it were, rather than a defensive bastion for Kanaks. Culture was playing for high political stakes.²⁶⁵

Brown's comments highlighting the way in which the inauguration of the CCT became implicated in the timetable, symbolism and dynamic of the 1998 negotiations on New Caledonia's politico-institutional future are confirmed by the local print-media coverage published in the lead up to the inauguration.²⁶⁶ The impetus for the convergence of dates between the Centre's inauguration and the finalisation and signing of the Noumea Accord included 'practical' considerations such as the anticipated presence of important government officials in New Caledonia for the inauguration, including notably Jospin, who was involved in the political negotiations taking place.²⁶⁷ However, as highlighted by Brown in the above citation, the CCT, its inauguration and the negotiated political agreement for New Caledonia's future were also interlinked in a number of important symbolic and substantive ways. The CCT itself constituted a topic of discussion in its own right in the preliminary bilateral negotiations between the FLNKS and the French

²⁶⁵ Brown (1998: 129); and see Bensa (2000: 27). The symbolic implication of the CCT project in the re-establishment of political stability and peace in New Caledonia was, however, present from the outset – see Bensa (1992: 12); Laulanne (1993: 189). Note also that the convergence of dates and events in 1998 was highly contingent, the completion of the CCT project having been originally anticipated earlier in the period delimited by the Matignon Accords but progressively delayed by various political stumbling blocks (particularly arising from the changing political context in 'la métropole') and technical setbacks. Indeed, even when construction work finally began on the Tina peninsula in 1995, the inauguration was still planned for May 1997, that is, a year before the conclusion of the Matignon Accords. The inauguration was only pushed back to May 1998 by reason of the bankruptcy of one of the companies involved in the Centre's construction: Olivier Bonetti, 'Le dernier des grands travaux du président Mitterrand – Le Centre Tjibaou : une main tendue entre les communautés', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 04/05/1998, 6.

²⁶⁶ For example, during a brief initial visit to Noumea in mid-February (just subsequent to the finalisation of the Bercy Agreements) to re-engage discussions on New Caledonia's future with the signatories of the Matignon Accords, Alain Christnacht is cited by LNC as affirming the importance of the CCT's inauguration and signals his desire for this 'moment fort' to be linked to the political negotiation process. 'Un « choc » au centre Tjibaou', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 14-15/02/1998, 3. In March, LNC also notes the FLNKS's desire 'de parvenir à une solution négociée' in relation to New Caledonia's politico-institutional future by the time of the inauguration of the CCT on the 4 May. 'Après la reprise des discussions politiques – L'ETAT ET LE FLNKS SE RETROUVENT EN TETE-A-TETE A PARIS', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 02/03/1998, 3.

²⁶⁷ See Michaël Guillon, 'Discussions sur l'avenir institutionnel – Paul Néaoutyine « satisfait » du travail effectué à Paris', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 12/03/1998, 3. Note that French President Jacques Chirac was also officially invited to the inauguration but, unlike Jospin, did not attend.

State on the '*contentieux colonial*',²⁶⁸ relating broadly to questions of the recognition and 'restitution' of Kanak identity and sovereignty in light of the '*fait colonial*' and the '*prise de possession*' of New Caledonia by France in 1853 and their consequences for the Kanak people.²⁶⁹

While the 'resolution' of the questions raised by this '*contentieux colonial*' represents a key element of the final Noumea Accord agreement reached on the 21 April and formally signed on the 5 May, particularly informing the Accord's Preamble,²⁷⁰ at this early stage of negotiations the positions of the FLNKS and the RPCR diverged considerably on this point. The resolution of the '*contentieux colonial*' was considered by the FLNKS to be fundamental to the negotiation of an agreement on New Caledonia's politico-institutional future.²⁷¹ In contrast, commenting from Noumea in March subsequent to the bilateral discussions on the '*contentieux colonial*' in Paris, Lafleur is reported by LNC as stating dismissively that this '*rencontre bilatérale Etat-FLNKS [...] a « trainé en longueur » autour de « détails mineurs »*.'²⁷²

Even after the signing of the Noumea Accord by the three parties to the agreement, divergence on the significance and implications of the Preamble's 'resolution' of the '*contentieux colonial*' can be seen to have persisted. This is apparent from Lafleur's response to the questions posed by the local 'loyalist' radio station, *Radio Rythme Bleu* (RRB), in relation to the Preamble in an interview conducted in May after the signing of the Accord. Key extracts of this interview were reproduced by the (similarly RPCR-

²⁶⁸ Among the different topics discussed were '*les structures coutumières, le statut civil, le droit coutumier, le patrimoine culturel et le centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou, le lien à la terre, et les signes identitaires*': Michaël Guillon, 'Après la fin de la première réunion bilatérale Etat-FLNKS – La prudence est de mise rue Oudinot', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/03/1998, 5.

²⁶⁹ See *ibid.*

²⁷⁰ The Preamble is discussed in the Introduction.

²⁷¹ See the citations from FLNKS representatives in Michaël Guillon, 'La coalition tente de rallier la « mouvance indépendantiste » à ses options – La négociation, priorité affichée du FLNKS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 30/03/1998, 4.

²⁷² Michaël Guillon, 'Interrogé hier par les journalistes de RRB et des Nouvelles – Jacques Lafleur rejette le concept de l'Etat associé', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/03/1998, 4.

directed) weekly paper, LNH.²⁷³ Asked '[q]ue vous inspire le préambule ? On a parlé de repentance, d'acte de contrition...', Lafleur exclaims: '[n]i repentance, ni contrition !'²⁷⁴ He expands on this answer in the following terms:

[L]e préambule consacre un long passage à la reconnaissance de l'identité des Mélanésiens. Ceux qui ne le veulent pas, je ne vois pas ce que ça leur enlève. Ceux qui souhaitent que ce problème ne se pose plus, comme c'est mon cas, et bien, ils sont ravis que cela ait été fait.²⁷⁵

According to this construction, once the negative consequences for the Kanak people of the '*fait colonial*' have been formally acknowledged and Kanak identity recognised (as in the terms of the Preamble to the Noumea Accord), the essence of the '*contentieux colonial*' has been adequately addressed and can consequently pose no further 'problems' or have any further implications from that point onwards – that is, it has been definitively 'resolved' and can now be forgotten.²⁷⁶

It is also important to note the way in which Lafleur refers to the Preamble in terms of the recognition of 'Kanak identity' (or rather, 'Melanesian identity'). In this manner, the direct reference to and acknowledgement of colonisation and Kanak indigeneity, along with the potential present political consequences thereof, is avoided. 'Kanak identity' thus presents the strategic advantage from a 'loyalist' perspective of being open to discursive disassociation from the realm of 'the political'. Similar references to the Preamble in terms of 'Kanak identity' also appear in the pages of LNC and LNH during this period.

²⁷³ LNC also reproduced some (less extensive) extracts from this interview – see Michaël Guillon, 'Le président du RPCR commente les accords de Nouméa', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 14/05/1998, 3.

²⁷⁴ Elizabeth Nouar and Nicolas Vignoles, 'JACQUES LAFLEUR ET LES ACCORDS DE NOUMÉA – « S'EMANCIPER SANS S'ELOIGNER... »', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 533, 22-27/05/1998, 6.

²⁷⁵ Ibid. Lafleur's use of the term '*Mélanésiens*' rather than '*Kanak*' (or one of its orthographic variants) can be viewed as a discursive indication of his political position in opposition to Kanak claims for independence.

²⁷⁶ This approach is consistent with Lafleur's position articulated in 1982 in relation to the event organised by the FI in Noumea's *Place des Cocotiers* to mark the 24 September anniversary, discussed in Annex 4.

The position advocated by Lafleur in 1998 in relation to the effect and significance of the Noumea Accord's Preamble in the passage cited above, reducing it to a 'merely symbolic' gesture with no significant concrete implications other than its posited final 'resolution' of questions regarding New Caledonia's (colonial) past (which is consequently precluded from having any further bearing on the country's present or future constitution, organisation and direction), is antithetical to the position held and advocated by the agreement's pro-independence signatories.

Pro-independence politicians can also be seen to frequently affirm and mobilise 'Kanak identity' in their political discourse. However, this term is used by them as shorthand for the special socio-political position and rights of the Kanak people as the country's indigenous, colonised people. From a pro-independence perspective, the recognition and restitution of 'Kanak identity' in the Preamble and in the substantive terms of the Noumea Accord itself is thus highly political and goes directly to the recognition and 'restitution' of Kanak sovereignty. This provides a clear illustration of the way in which the Accord's formulation enables the final agreement to accommodate vastly divergent interpretations, a characteristic which represents both a great strength and a great weakness.²⁷⁷

One of the key tensions inherent to the Noumea Accord and its divergent readings is echoed in the largely 'latent' tensions identifiable in the CCT project and its discursive representation in the public domain at the time of its inauguration, including in the local written press. These tensions relate to the construction of Kanak identity (and culture), and of its formal recognition and restitution, as central to the possibility of realising a 'common destiny' shared by equal, New Caledonian 'citizens' into the future.²⁷⁸ What is, should or will be the relationship between, on the one hand, Kanak (indigenous) identity and culture and, on the other, the identities and cultures of New Caledonia's non-Kanak citizens, or a potentially shared local identity and culture common to all of the country's citizens?

²⁷⁷ Brown (1998: 130, 136-137).

²⁷⁸ See the discussion in the Introduction.

The discursive inscription of the CCT in the Noumea Accord context of its inauguration in the local print-media coverage of the event – the CCT as an inclusive local symbol and institution?

As discussed previously, the CCT project was initially inscribed in the political context and program of *rééquilibrage* engaged pursuant to the 1988 Matignon Accords, constituting a means of giving concrete effect to the official recognition and valorisation of Kanak culture and identity. In that context, the CCT's predominantly Kanak local focus as an '*outil et symbole*'²⁷⁹ was a logical and, indeed, a necessary feature of the project. Thus, responding to the question of whether '*c'est une évidence de ne parler du CCJMT qu'en termes de culture kanak*' in an interview published in 1994 in *Mwà Vée*, Alain Christnacht (at that time *Délégué du Gouvernement en Nouvelle-Calédonie*) is cited as stating that local French culture should be represented in and by local institutions other than the CCT: '*[o]n fait un Centre Culturel kanak, on ne fait pas un Centre des cultures du monde en général.*'²⁸⁰ In an interview in 2008, Togna acknowledged retrospectively that '*[L]a relation kanako-kanak est restée longtemps imprégnée dans l'institution ADCK-centre culturel Tjibaou.*'²⁸¹

By reason of its particular inscription in the Matignon Accords' context, the question of local non-Kanak involvement and inclusion in the CCT project was not a salient issue

²⁷⁹ CCT/ADCK, 'Présentation : L'Agence de développement de la culture kanak : Projet architectural', 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/lagence-de-developpement-de-la-culture-kanak/projet-architectural>>.

²⁸⁰ Christnacht (1994: 56). Later in this interview, Christnacht affirms: '*je crois que le Centre Culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou appartient à Jean-Marie Tjibaou, à ses héritiers, au sens culturel du terme. Je ne crois pas, en effet, que les cultures fermées aient un grand avenir. Il faut donc s'ouvrir, s'affronter, échanger nos idées. Les autres cultures ont leur place ici, je ne sais pas si c'est physiquement dans le Centre Culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou ou ailleurs sur le Territoire.*' On the other hand, at another point Christnacht highlights the Centre's broader focus and inclusion of Melanesian and Oceanic culture(s): '*je pense qu'il y a des cercles concentriques : il y a la culture kanak, les autres cultures mélanésiennes, les autres cultures océaniques.*'

²⁸¹ Togna (2008a: 27). Indeed, Togna maintains that, even ten years after the CCT's inauguration, '*[j]e trouve que dans ce domaine-là, et même si nous avons beaucoup progressé vers les autres, la porte n'est restée qu'entrouverte.*' For a discussion of these issues and the associated criticisms of the CCT in the local public domain (including in the local written press) in the period subsequent to its inauguration see the discussion in Annex 8.

throughout the period of the Centre's conceptualisation and construction. At the time of the completion of the CCT's physical construction in mid-April 1998 (just prior to the finalisation of the Noumea Accord agreement) LNC situates the history of the CCT project in relation to the Matignon Accords as follows:

*[L]ancée au début des années 1990, l'ADCK (Agence de développement de la culture kanak) est aujourd'hui au milieu du gué. Son grand projet de construire un centre culturel, outil de rééquilibrage de promotion de la culture kanake voulu par les accords de Matignon est à présent achevé.*²⁸²

Neither this article nor the earlier texts published by the daily newspaper in 1998 foreground or question the inclusion or exclusion of local non-Kanak communities in relation to the CCT project.²⁸³ Indeed, as seen previously, one of the first front-page headlines published by the paper in relation to the CCT in 1998 characterises the CCT as '[u]n monument à la gloire de la culture kanake',²⁸⁴ seemingly leaving little room for the representation and inclusion of local non-Kanak communities in the CCT.

This specifically Kanak local orientation is also apparent in the Noumea Accord's own treatment of the CCT in the first section of the agreement's text, devoted to '[I]'identité Kanak'. The provision in question specifies that:

²⁸² Olivier Bonetti, 'Inauguration, expositions, danse et théâtre – Le calendrier du centre culturel Tjibaou enfin dévoilé', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 15/04/1998, 7.

²⁸³ One exception was the newspaper's treatment of the fact that the majority of local individuals and the New Caledonian public at large would not be able to attend the inauguration in person, but would be restricted to watching the event on television and waiting to visit the Centre after its opening to the public in June. See 'Malgré une inauguration prévue les 4 et 5 mai – Le centre culturel Tjibaou ouvert au public seulement le 16 juin', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 16/03/1998, 12; Olivier Bonetti, 'Inauguration, expositions, danse et théâtre – Le calendrier du centre culturel Tjibaou enfin dévoilé', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 15/04/1998, 7.

²⁸⁴ 'CENTRE TJIBAOU – Un monument à la gloire de la culture kanake', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/03/1998, 1. Note also that *Le billet de l'affreux Jojo* published on the 5 May is critical of the fact that local school children were given the day off for the inauguration but were not able to actually attend the event, concluding: '[c]e n'est pas tous les jours que ces jeunes pourront vivre un événement qui, de l'avis de tous est historique pour la Calédonie, mais aussi pour tout le Pacifique Sud. On nous chante qu'il faut que les jeunes s'approprient cette culture calédonienne. C'était l'occasion ou jamais...' 'Le billet de l'affreux Jojo', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 54.

*[l]'Etat s'engage à apporter durablement l'assistance technique et les finances nécessaires au Centre culturel Tjibaou pour lui permettre de tenir pleinement son rôle de pôle de rayonnement de la culture kanak.*²⁸⁵

Kanak culture is clearly constructed in this provision as central to the nature and missions of the CCT as an institution.

In contrast, some of the local written press coverage of the Centre's inauguration can be seen to expand the construction of the CCT's nature, missions and significance in reference to the broader framework elaborated by the Noumea Accord, in which the recognition and restitution of Kanak identity is indissociable from the project of forging a 'common destiny', shared by and inclusive of all of the country's inhabitants. This expansion is identifiable both in the discourse of some of the local newspapers themselves and in the the discourse of ADCK and various political representatives reproduced in those papers.

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The first article published by LNC to suggest the CCT's openness in relation to and inclusion of the country's non-Kanak communities actually appears on the 17 April – four days before the finalisation of the Noumea Accord. This article relates to the sculpture commissioned in 1997 by the ADCK from local ('métis') artist Norman Song to represent New Caledonia in the CCT's 'Jinu' (or 'Spirit') 'case', in which

²⁸⁵ *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*, 'Document d'orientation', point 1.3.5. At the time of the CCT's inauguration and public opening in 1998, 50% of the annual budget for running the Centre (35 million CFP) was funded by the French State, with the remaining 50% to be funded by local collectivities: Olivier Bonetti, 'Combien il coûte', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 7. In 2011, according to the CCT/ADCK website, the annual budget is funded as follows: '39% Etat, 40% Nouvelle-Calédonie et les 3 Provinces et 21 % de recettes propres.' CCT/ADCK, 'Présentation : Le Centre Culturel Tjibaou : Présentation', 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/le-centre-culturel-tjibaou/presentation>>. The transfer (in the framework of the Noumea Accord) of responsibility for the ADCK and the CCT from the State to the New Caledonian Government is programmed to take place on the 1 January 2012: Résolution n° 97 du 30 novembre 2010 relative au transfert de l'Etat à la Nouvelle-Calédonie de l'agence de développement de la culture kanak, *Journal Officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, 9 December 2010, 9772, <<http://www.juridoc.gouv.nc>>. In this connection, see also Gorodey (2008).

monumental sculptures commissioned by the ADCK to represent ‘*les cultures du Pacifique*’ are displayed.²⁸⁶ In its report on the reception by the ADCK of the completed work, LNC states under the subheading ‘*[p]lus qu’un discours politique*’:

*Marie-Claude Tjibaou a félicité Norman Song en des termes élogieux : « Tu es jeune, a-t-elle dit, mais tu as su démontrer, par ton travail, qu’un « petit Caldoche » peut représenter la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Je crois que c’est plus important que tous les discours politiques... Le centre culturel est destiné à tous les enfants de ce pays. Ton « Thydo » [aiguille] sera le porte-parole de tout ce que nous sommes et le symbole d’unité entre nous tous. »*²⁸⁷

The inspiration for this sculpture in Kanak culture is apparent from LNC’s discussion of the work, which is identified as a giant wooden *poteau* sculpted in the form of ‘*l’aiguille qui sert à attacher, à tisser la paille qui recouvre le toit de la case*.’²⁸⁸ However, this inspiration from and link to Kanak culture is never explicitly stated in the newspaper’s coverage.²⁸⁹

LNC’s coverage affirms that ‘New Caledonia’ (rather than Kanak culture) will be ‘*dignement représentée dans la case « Jinu » par la sculpture de Norman Song*’, a local non-Kanak, ‘*Caldoche*’ artist.²⁹⁰ This can be contrasted to the CCT/ADCK’s emphasis on the Kanak cultural inspiration and inscription of this work in the wall label which now accompanies it in the CCT building. This wall label identifies the sculpture,

²⁸⁶ ‘Arts plastiques, le message de « Kili »’ (1998: 35).

²⁸⁷ ‘Elle représentera la Nouvelle-Calédonie – L’œuvre de Norman Song au centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/04/1998, 4.

²⁸⁸ ‘Une œuvre fruit d’une réflexion artistique – « Thydo » ou l’« élévation » d’un être parfait’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/04/1998, 4.

²⁸⁹ To take another example in which this link is made only implicitly and so left ambiguous, the newspaper states: ‘*[n]ous avons choisi Norman, explique Emmanuel Kasarhérou, pour ses grandes qualités artistiques. Il a produit un œuvre qui est tout à fait extraordinaire. « A la fois inspirée par la tradition et le sens des choses et créatrice de formes nouvelles. La forme que Norman Song a produite n’est ni une flèche faîtière, ni un chambranle. Pourtant quand on la voit, elle évoque quelque chose de complètement liée au pays. »*’ ‘Elle représentera la Nouvelle-Calédonie – L’œuvre de Norman Song au centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/04/1998, 4.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

entitled 'Kili', as the work of 'Norman Song, Village de Chagrin, Koumac, aire coutumière Hoot ma Whaap, Nouvelle Calédonie'. Song is also identified as a 'jeune artiste calédonien', but the specifically Kanak inspiration and inscription of his work is clearly explained and emphasised.²⁹¹ This is similarly the case in *Mwà Vée*'s treatment of the work in the first edition published subsequent to the CCT's inauguration.²⁹² Song is quoted by the journal as affirming his work as being '*de la sculpture kanak. C'est à travers l'art kanak que j'ai abordé la création artistique et trouvé mon inspiration.*'²⁹³ *Mwà Vée* also describes the reception by the ADCK of the sculpture as having been achieved through a 'customary' ceremony – an aspect of this event which is occluded by LNC's coverage, despite its indication that 'Godard Sari, grand chef de Houailou et représentant du conseil consultatif coutumier' was present for the occasion.²⁹⁴

On the other hand, Song is identified in *Mwà Vée* as a 'métis', and the journal affirms that his sculpture '*symbolise aussi d'une manière forte l'ouverture aux autres au-delà des origines, des races, des couleurs de peau.*'²⁹⁵ The journal continues: '[c]'est en tout cas dans cet esprit que Norman a compris la commande du Centre Tjibaou et qu'il l'a interprétée et vécue.'²⁹⁶ In support of this statement, the journal quotes Song as stating:

[j]e crois que nous sommes désormais engagés sur une voie d'avenir. La reconnaissance de l'autre, l'ouverture font place aux rapports de force.

²⁹¹ The label then runs: 'Kili, c'est l'aiguille en bois qui sert à coudre les bottes de paille sur les toitures des maisons. Elle permet de passer le lien qui enserme la paille sur la charpente. Kili, c'est aussi le symbole de tous les liens qui unissent les gens et les clans autour de la Grande Case qu'ils construisent pour le chef, l'Aîné. La sculpture de Norman Song, jeune artiste calédonien, s'inspire des mythes anciens du pays kanak, il l'a réalisé avec de jeunes kanak et en a présenté l'idée aux vieux qui sont sa référence. Il a voulu en faire l'image de la renaissance et du lien profond qui surgit des copeaux et de la matière originelle. Elle rappelle ce texte que Jean-Marie Tjibaou avait publié lors du festival Mélanésia 2000 (en 1975) qui disait : « Nos fêtes sont le mouvement de l'aiguille qui sert à lier la paille au sommet de notre maison, afin que tous les brins ne forment qu'un seul toit comme tous nos mots ne forment qu'une seule parole ». Le bois choisi par Norman Song est le bois de fer : il est le symbole de la Parole dans la culture kanak ; on dit, que sous l'effet du vent, ses ramilles font entendre la voix des ancêtres.' As at June 2009.

²⁹² 'Arts plastiques, le message de « Kili »' (1998).

²⁹³ Ibid., 33.

²⁹⁴ 'Elle représentera la Nouvelle-Calédonie – L'œuvre de Norman Song au centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/04/1998, 4.

²⁹⁵ 'Arts plastiques, le message de « Kili »' (1998: 31).

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

[...] *J'ai voulu que se retrouvent dans ce poteau les cultures d'ici, celles du Pacifique et celles d'Europe qui sont également présentes en nous, en moi. Quand vous regardez le poteau, vous voyez qu'il n'est pas entièrement noir ou blanc, comme moi, je suis issu de grands-parents et parents kanak, français, chinois, et anglais. J'ai voulu montrer que le métissage est quelque chose de riche. En langue de Lifou, le nom que j'ai donné au poteau, « élévation », veut dire « debout ». Pour moi, il signifie que le chemin de l'avenir est débroussé.*²⁹⁷

The artist's framing of the signification of his work in this quotation, published subsequent to the conclusion and signing of the Noumea Accord, can be seen to resonate with this changing broader local socio-political context.²⁹⁸

Particularly in light of this treatment in *Mwà Vée*, the choice of Song to represent the culture of the country as a whole in the CCT's 'case Jinu' might be seen to confirm Togna's affirmation in 2008 that, in elaborating the CCT project prior to the finalisation of the Noumea Accord, the ADCK had already begun to open out towards the country's other (non-Kanak) communities and been engaged in a similar dynamic to that later enshrined in the Accord itself.²⁹⁹ On the other hand, Togna also states that the acceptance of the display of local 'European' artists in the CCT is a more recent phenomenon, dating only from around 2003 and still eliciting strong criticisms from some Kanak people.³⁰⁰ It is particularly significant that Song's (at least partial) non-Kanak background and the symbolism of his work relating to cultural 'métissage' in the country is not emphasised in the CCT's current display of the work itself.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 32.

²⁹⁸ This is even more apparent in statements made by the artist in 2007, quoted by *Le Pays magazine*. According to the magazine: '[é]lévation ou la sculpture représentant l'aiguille qui sert à assembler les bottes de paille appelée kili dans la langue de Koumac, ou encore djido dans d'autres langues, commande du centre culturel Tjibaou en 1998, évoque aussi l'histoire des familles de Chagrin. « C'est encore nous, mais on est libérés. C'est une nouvelle naissance à l'image de celle qu'a connue le pays à cette époque-là. L'aiguille sert à faire les liens. Le centre culturel est dédié à la culture kanak, mais c'est aussi la maison de tout le monde. »' 'Norman Song s'expose', *Le Pays magazine*, no. 22, September 2007.

²⁹⁹ Togna (2008a: 24).

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 25.

It is also worth highlighting in this connection that the idea of ‘*métissage*’ has historically been highly controversial in the New Caledonian context. As noted by Brown:

the *métis* in New Caledonia was long a taboo subject. [...] In fact, the very possibility of this figure of the *métis* emerging as a social factor of note [...] seemed for decades to be excluded, and in the exceptional cases when it did receive attention, it was typically vilified.³⁰¹

The reasons for the long-standing absence of any positive social category and identity associated with ‘*métissage*’ in New Caledonia stem from the particular development and structure of colonial society in New Caledonia, and the persisting subsequent influence of the associated, deeply entrenched social cleavages.³⁰²

While the social category and identity of ‘*le métis*’ might now be emerging and appears to be claimed as a positive category of self-identification by an increasing number of individuals, including artists such as Song,³⁰³ it still largely remains a relatively amorphous and unstable collective identity and social grouping. According to Mokaddem in 2002, ‘*le métissage biologique n'est pas encore devenu un métissage culturel*’.³⁰⁴ Moreover, the mobilisation of the figure of the ‘*métis*’ and of social, cultural and/or biological ‘*métissage*’ as a ‘model’ for the future socio-political development of New Caledonia by various actors generally remains controversial, in some cases because of persisting prejudice, but in others by reason of the fact that

³⁰¹ Brown (2005: 306-307).

³⁰² Merle (1995: 403-404); Angléviel (2004a). As explained by Merle in her account of the ‘colonial experience’ in New Caledonia, the otherwise deeply socially divided local penal and settler population of ‘European’ origin only developed a consciousness of being a unique and unified group, with a shared identity, through its relationship to, and radical distinction from, ‘the Other’ – that is, from ‘the Kanak’ and from Melanesian society. Merle states that in this radically divided and segregated colonial society, an individual’s identification with one or other group was predominantly determined by their culture and upbringing, rather than their skin colour, so that ‘*il n'existe pas de caste intermédiaire entre les deux univers, caste métisse qui se reconnaîtrait en tant que telle*’. Merle (1995: 403).

³⁰³ Note also that the newly reformulated 2009 census allowed respondents to identify themselves as belonging to more than one ethno-cultural community and 8.3% of respondents did so: Rivoilan and Broustet (2011: 3); Catherine Léhé, ‘Qui sommes nous ?’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/02/2011, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

³⁰⁴ Original emphasis, Mokaddem (2002: 536).

Kanak (indigenous) identity has itself only relatively recently been officially recognised and valorised (including through prominent initiatives such as the CCT), and been accorded, at least in the official political discourse of the Noumea Accord agreement, a central position and role in the development of the country's socio-political future and 'identity'.

As noted above, in LNC's treatment of Song's work published in April 1998 just prior to the finalisation of the Noumea Accord, Song is identified in a direct quotation attributed to Marie-Claude Tjibaou as a '*Caldoche*', rather than a '*métis*'. This coverage can consequently be seen to strongly suggest the CCT's openness in relation to and inclusion and representation of New Caledonia's 'non-Kanak' communities. However, the newspaper includes no further references in its coverage of the CCT's inauguration to this example of a concrete way in which the Centre's discursive construction as an inclusive symbol and institution might be grounded in its actual museological and representational practice.

It is also worth noting in this connection that Nicolas Kurtovitch's authorship of the play, *Le Sentier*, to be performed as part of the CCT's opening arts festival, *Cabo Ko*, is indicated in the newspaper's brief description of that festival published alongside its treatment of Song's sculpture in this April edition.³⁰⁵ However, the fact that Kurtovitch belongs to New Caledonia's long-established local 'European' community is not mentioned or foregrounded.³⁰⁶ Several aspects of the CCT's opening festival, including this play, involved the participation of local non-Kanak artists,³⁰⁷ but this openness and inclusion was generally not specifically highlighted by LNC in its coverage.

³⁰⁵ 'REPÈRES', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/04/1998, 4.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ To take another example, Song was also a participant in the CCT's two-week workshop '*Wakè nâimâ*' ('*Créons ensemble*' in *Paicî*), grouping 23 visual artists from New Caledonia and the Pacific region, at the end of which the works created by the artists during the workshop were displayed in an exhibition at the Centre. 'festival Cabo ko, 17 – 28 juin 1998 – supplément', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/06/1998; Michel Martin, 'Au Centre culturel Tjibaou du 17 au 28 juin – Le programme du festival Cabo Ko', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/06/1998, 7. See also Brown (1998: 135); Jolly (2001: 437-440).

One exception is the characterisation in the newspaper's special supplement on the festival published before its commencement of Kurtovitch's play, *Le Sentier*, as a:

*création théâtrale [...] née du métissage. Elle regroupe des acteurs kanaks de la Grande Terre et des îles autour de Nicolas Kurtovitch, poète et nouvelliste calédonien, de Mélissa Becker et de Jean-Pierre Badie qui signent la mise en scène.*³⁰⁸

This supplement tends to read as a lengthy advertisement for the festival (complete with prominent CCT/ADCK branding) and is presumably largely if not wholly based on information provided to the newspaper directly by the ADCK. Significantly, this characterisation of Kurtovitch's play can be contrasted to that in LNC's article covering the play published subsequent to its debut, which includes no reference to the play as the product of '*métissage*'. The significance of the inclusion of this work written by a local 'European' author in the CCT's opening arts festival in terms of the Centre's openness to and inclusion of the country's non-Kanak communities is not highlighted by LNC in this later article.³⁰⁹

The headline of the main article published by LNC in relation to the CCT's inauguration in its edition dated 4 May characterises the Centre as '*une main tendue entre les communautés*'.³¹⁰ While one of the lead dot-points heading this article maintains that the CCT '*a pour vocation d'être le phare de la culture océanienne*', emphasising the Centre's broader Oceanic inscription and orientation, this article's main body of text focuses more on the CCT's signification for and in relation to New Caledonia's Kanak and non-Kanak populations, and the relations between them in light of the contemporary political context.

³⁰⁸ 'festival Cabo ko, 17 – 28 juin 1998 – supplément', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/06/1998.

³⁰⁹ Sophie Vallés, 'Dans le cadre du festival Cabo Ko au Centre Tjibaou – « Le sentier », ou le poids de la tradition', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/06/1998, 10. On the other hand, this article's discussion of the play itself does indicate both its inspiration in 'classical' Greek tragedy and in Kanak 'tradition', as well as the central role in the plot of a 'European' woman in addition to the main Kanak protagonists and the Kanak setting '*en tribu*'. For discussion of this play, see also Brown (1998: 135).

³¹⁰ Olivier Bonetti, 'Le dernier des grands travaux du président Mitterrand – Le Centre Tjibaou : une main tendue entre les communautés', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 6.

This article's text opens by affirming that:

[L]e 4 mai sera désormais une date symbolique pour la Nouvelle-Calédonie tout entière et pour le peuple kanak en particulier. C'est en effet le 4 mai 1989 que Jean-Marie Tjibaou a été assassiné. Ce sera le 4 mai 1998 que le centre culturel qui porte son nom sera inauguré. Entre ces deux dates, l'ADCK [...] a joué pleinement son rôle. Longtemps dénigrée, la culture kanake a retrouvé grâce à elle, un véritable « droit de cité ». Et de quelle manière !³¹¹

This relatively frank acknowledgement of the 'denigration' of Kanak culture in the past can be seen to resonate with the Preamble of the Noumea Accord's treatment of colonisation and its impacts on the Kanak people. Certain political implications could be read into LNC's effective identification of the CCT as the means through which Kanak culture has, through the engagement of the ADCK, '*retrouvé [...] un véritable « droit de cité »*', in line with the discussion above of this '*droit de cité*' concept and the political implications of the CCT's placement in Noumea. However, these implications are potentially obscured or defused in the discursive context of LNC's article through the newspaper's reference to 'Kanak culture' in this connection, and the common discursive construction of 'culture' as distinct from and separate to 'politics'.

On the other hand, the significance of the CCT is constructed in this article primarily in reference to both the country's recent 'political' and 'cultural' history, the line between which is ultimately blurred in the newspaper's construction of the Centre's symbolic significance. At the end of this article, under the subheading '*[d]epuis 1975*', the newspaper states:

[s]ans ce que l'on appelle pudiquement les événements, sans la poignée de main historique entre Jacques Lafleur et Jean-Marie Tjibaou scellant les accords de Matignon, cet édifice n'aurait jamais vu le jour. Dernier des grands travaux de François Mitterrand, il est érigé sur le site où eut lieu en 1975, le Festival Mélanésia 2000. « Conçu par Jean-Marie

³¹¹ Ibid.

*Tjibaou, Mélanésie 2000 a inscrit la culture kanake dans l'identité kanake, dans l'universalité des cultures du monde. Vingt-trois ans après, le Centre culturel Tjibaou prend le relais en offrant un corps à l'âme de Mélanésie 2000 » écrit Emanuel Kasarhérou [...].*³¹²

In this passage, both the posited political conditions for the CCT's realisation, and the 'ancestry' of the CCT as a 'cultural' project and form of engagement (according to the ADCK's own construction),³¹³ are clearly highlighted.

However, *Mélanésie 2000*'s own radical political message and project (discussed in Chapter One) are not acknowledged or highlighted, as is also the case in Kasarhérou's original text.³¹⁴ Nor is *Mélanésie 2000* linked to the contemporary political context and the Noumea Accord, despite the fact that the festival's political message and project can, in certain significant respects, be likened to the socio-political project articulated in that Accord and despite the links drawn in this article both between *Mélanésie 2000*, the CCT and Tjibaou, and between the CCT, Tjibaou and the Noumea Accord.³¹⁵

³¹² Ibid. Note that in the original text the term '*kanak*' is invariable: Kasarhérou (1998). Thus, while the daily newspaper's use of this term might be considered relatively 'progressive' in the contemporary context in comparison to the continued resistance to its use by RPCR politicians such as Lafleur and Loueckhote (and, indeed, in comparison to its general avoidance of the term '*canaque*' and its variants in its 1974/75 coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*), refusing to make the term invariable might be seen to reflect the newspaper's persisting (if generally less overt) 'loyalist' bias. Note that in its coverage of the CCT's inauguration published on the 5 May, the paper itself highlighted the use of the 'ADCC' acronym, rather than 'ADCK', on '*le panneau de chantier de la ville de Nouméa situé à l'entrée de la rue des accords de Matignon*', which leads to the CCT. The paper also indicates that '*[L]a commune y précise notamment qu'elle a déboursé 85,6 millions pour enrober la chaussée.*' However, the political implications of this incident are not directly addressed or explained by the paper. Jacquotte Sampérez et al., 'ECHOS – ADCC ou ADCK', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 05/05/1998, 26.

³¹³ Kasarhérou is identified by the paper as the '*directeur culturel de l'ADCK*' and the citation is referenced as being taken from *Mwà Vée* no. 20. Olivier Bonetti, 'Le dernier des grands travaux du président Mitterrand – Le Centre Tjibaou : une main tendue entre les communautés', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 04/05/1998, 6.

³¹⁴ Kasarhérou (1998).

³¹⁵ Note that by reason of its emphasis on Tjibaou's central role in both the Kanak pro-independence movement and in the Kanak cultural *revendication* in this passage, the newspaper cannot be said to obscure Tjibaou as a political figure through the invocation of his engagement in favour of Kanak culture in this instance. Similarly, while Tjibaou's *revendication* of the recognition of Kanak culture and identity is foregrounded in an article published on the opposite page describing the new film (entitled *Tjibaou, la mémoire assassinée*) to be screened during the CCT's inauguration, Tjibaou is described as a '*leader indépendantiste kanak*' and his political engagement is made apparent in this article. Olivier Bonetti, '« Tjibaou, la mémoire assassinée »', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 04/05/1998, 7. This is equally the

This more expansive and inclusive significance attributed to the CCT project, which is directly linked to New Caledonia's contemporary political context, appears in the text immediately following the passage reproduced above in which the citation from Kasarhérou emphasises the CCT's continuity with *Mélanésie 2000* in terms of Kanak culture and identity. LNC states:

*[c]ertes, mais la portée du centre culturel ne va-t-elle pas au-delà ? Alors que la Nouvelle-calédonie [sic] s'engage en douceur sur la voie de l'autonomie avec la signature des accords de Nouméa ce mardi 5 mai, le Centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou a valeur emblématique pour le Territoire. Certains y voient déjà le symbole d'une main tendue entre les communautés. Tous les espoirs sont donc permis.*³¹⁶

This formulation of the CCT's symbolism as '*une main tendue entre les communautés*', which is also foregrounded and affirmed in this article's headline, clearly resonates with the symbolic moment marking the conclusion of the Matignon Accords ten years earlier – referred to by Brown as the 'much mythologised "poignée de main" between the two political opponents, Tjibaou and Lafleur.'³¹⁷ The continuity between the 1988 agreement and the new agreement to be formally concluded on the 5 May is consequently emphasised in this passage, and the CCT is effectively linked symbolically by LNC to both political agreements, but particularly to the Noumea Accord. The newspaper's favourable representation of the Noumea Accord can be seen to be conditioned by its characterisation (and discursive delimitation) as leading to New Caledonia's 'autonomy', rather than independence.

The Noumea Accord and the CCT are nevertheless linked in this passage primarily to New Caledonia and to the relationship between the country's different communities, rather than to the involvement of or relations with the French State. This might be

case of Tjibaou's representation in the daily newspaper in the majority of articles relating to the inauguration, although arguably with the significant exception of the editorial piece published on the 5 May, discussed below.

³¹⁶ Olivier Bonetti, 'Le dernier des grands travaux du président Mitterrand – Le Centre Tjibaou : une main tendue entre les communautés', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 6.

³¹⁷ Brown (1998: 126).

contrasted to the fact that the French State is a key third signatory to the Accord, and the realisation of the CCT project was largely the product of collaboration between, on the one hand, certain pro-independence Kanak individuals engaged in the local ‘cultural sector’ through the ADCK and, on the other, political and administrative representatives of the French State, rather than between the local Kanak and non-Kanak communities. The importance and involvement of the French State is consequently downplayed (if, perhaps, implicitly assumed)³¹⁸ in this concluding passage.³¹⁹

The discursive construction of the CCT as having a broader symbolic and practical significance in terms of New Caledonian society as a whole and the relations between all of the country’s (Kanak and non-Kanak) inhabitants is also identifiable in comments made by Togna in a short interview published by LNC on the opposite page to the article discussed above.³²⁰ At one point Togna can be seen to extend the symbolism of the CCT building’s unfinished appearance, ‘*en pleine mutation*’, from Kanak society to New Caledonian society more broadly.³²¹ Togna is also quoted as affirming in relation to the ADCK’s work up to this point that the Agency has ‘*permis d’imprégner le pays de culture kanake, de mieux la faire connaître aux Calédoniens*’.³²² He then continues:

[a]u fil des visites guidées, j’ai rencontré des oreilles attentives. C’est rassurant sur l’avenir de ce pays. A mon sens, il s’agit là d’une pièce maîtresse pour le développement d’une identité commune.³²³

³¹⁸ The characterisation of the Noumea Accord as leading to New Caledonia’s ‘autonomy’ is significant in this regard.

³¹⁹ On the other hand, the headline of the article highlights the involvement of the French State by characterising the CCT as ‘*[L]e dernier des grands travaux de président Mitterrand*’. However, the substantially more prominent part of the headline, printed in a very large, bold font, represents the Centre as ‘*une main tendue entre les communautés*’. Olivier Bonetti, ‘Le dernier des grands travaux du président Mitterrand – Le Centre Tjibaou : une main tendue entre les communautés’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 6.

³²⁰ Olivier Bonetti, ‘Questions à... Octave Togna, directeur général de l’ADCK – « Nous avons une obligation de qualité, par respect pour ceux qui ont financé ce projet »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 7.

³²¹ Togna is quoted as stating: ‘“*Le Centre Tjibaou donne l’impression d’un bâtiment non fini, en pleine mutation, à l’image de la société kanake et même calédonienne*”’: *ibid.*

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ *Ibid.*

This construction of the role of the ADCK (and the CCT) in New Caledonian society and its importance for the country's future can be seen to bear many similarities to the discourse articulated by Tjibaou in 1974 in his introductory text explaining the role and objectives of *Mélanésie 2000*, conceived as a means of instituting a meaningful and respectful dialogue on Kanak terms between the indigenous and the non-indigenous cultures and people now living in New Caledonia, and thereby of insuring the future peace and prosperity of the country as a whole.³²⁴

Togna's reference to (and apparent advocacy of) the development of a 'common identity' in New Caledonia can be seen to echo some readings and discursive constructions and mobilisations of the Noumea Accord. However, it might be noted that comments made subsequently by Togna qualify his support for the construction of a 'common identity' in New Caledonia as support for a shared identity defined in political terms (and associated with the construction of local 'citizenship' and the elaboration and appropriation by all of a 'common history' of the country), which he distinguishes from the construction of a unique and uniform 'cultural identity', to which he is opposed.³²⁵

Moreover, it is worth noting that in 2008, Togna is cited by *Mwà Vée* as affirming in response to the question as to whether the CCT should remain a 'Kanak cultural centre' or become a 'Caledonian cultural centre' that: '*la culture de référence doit rester la culture kanak*'.³²⁶ However, Togna also affirms:

[e]n tant que Kanak, nous sommes statutairement reconnus, c'est un fait.

Il s'agit maintenant de continuer à inscrire notre dimension d'homme

³²⁴ See the discussion in Chapter One.

³²⁵ See for example Emmanuel Jeanjean, 'OCTAVE TOGNA, DIRECTEUR DU FESTIVAL – « Notre identité est devant nous... »', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 659, 02-08/11/2000, 18; Togna (2008b). See also the discussion in Annex 9. Note the resonance of this perspective with Togna's earlier comments, published in *Mwà Vée* three years before the conclusion of the Noumea Accord, in relation to the CCT project: '[c]e pays doit avoir la référence culturelle kanak, nourrie par la richesse culturelle des autres composantes du Territoire. Le Centre Culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou sera une référence culturelle kanak avec une ouverture aux autres cultures du Territoire afin que s'élabore une histoire commune des gens de ce pays du Pacifique.' Togna (1995: 5). Note also the similarities between Togna's perspective regarding the question of cultural identity in New Caledonia and that articulated by Alain Christnacht, published in an interview with *Mwà Vée* in 1994: Christnacht (1994: 53).

³²⁶ Togna (2008a: 28).

kanak dans le « vivre ensemble » et d'utiliser le Centre comme un outil culturel du destin commun, parce qu'il n'existe pas d'endroit aussi approprié pour travailler dans cette direction.³²⁷

Togna thus affirms the centrality of Kanak culture and identity into the future, while expressing his support for the construction of a 'common destiny' shared by and inclusive of all of the country's inhabitants. The CCT is constructed as a central cultural institution and tool in both of these respects.

On the day of the official signing of the Noumea Accord, following the CCT's inauguration on the 4 May 1998, the front page of LNC is dominated by the headline '*Jospin au pays de l'Accord*', accompanied by two photographs from the CCT's inauguration, underneath which a passage of text runs: '*[a]rrivé hier, le Premier ministre scellera aujourd'hui les accords de Nouméa. Inaugurant le Centre Tjibaou, il a appelé au « dialogue des cultures ».*'³²⁸ This interweaving in the newspaper's coverage of the local political events with the CCT's inauguration is also apparent in the editorial signed by the newspaper's Editor-in-Chief, Didier Fléaux, also published on the front page.

This editorial has particular significance given the importance of editorials as a genre of news discourse,³²⁹ its placement on the newspaper's front page and the rarity of editorials in LNC. It begins:

ET SI POUR UNE FOIS, parenthèse de l'histoire, on s'en tenait aux symboles. Si hier et aujourd'hui on évitait d'anticiper sur les difficultés qui ne manqueront pas de surgir demain lorsqu'il s'agira de mettre en œuvre les accords de Nouméa. Si ces deux jours du 4 et 5 mai restaient dans la mémoire collective comme un moment privilégié où chacun se prend à rêver. Sans mesurer le chemin parcouru et sans craindre

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ 'Jospin au pays de l'Accord', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 1.

³²⁹ See the discussion in Chapter One.

*l'avenir. S'en tenir simplement aux apparences que chacun veut donner par les symboles multipliés.*³³⁰

Fléaux goes on to identify these ‘*symboles*’, including the CCT,³³¹ the presence of Michel Rocard,³³² the signing of ‘*un pacte raisonnable et courageux*’ in Noumea rather than Paris,³³³ and the ‘*volonté de Jacques Lafleur de parapher le préambule des Accords qui reconnaissent pleinement l’identité kanake*’.³³⁴

Fléaux posits that:

*[t]out ce faisceau symbolique concourt à ancrer dans la mémoire des populations de ce Territoire la référence à des valeurs qui avait, un jour, été oubliées. Le respect d’autrui, la tolérance et les valeurs de toute démocratie digne de ce nom.*³³⁵

Fléaux’s affirmation of these Western liberal democratic values foreshadows the conclusion of the editorial, according to which, ‘*[d]ans le processus empirique engagé ici,*’ identified as the product of ‘*la méthode Jospin*’ and his project to construct a ‘*France exemplaire*’, ‘*on pensera peut-être demain que la France a valeur*

³³⁰ Didier Fléaux, ‘Une France exemplaire’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 1.

³³¹ ‘[C]e Centre culturel qui porte le nom d’une « mémoire assassinée ». Celle de Jean-Marie Tjibaou qui prouve assez que tout combat pour le respect de la dignité humaine n’est jamais inutile. [...] Evoquer le souvenir de Jean-Marie Tjibaou, c’est honorer la mémoire de tout un peuple’: *ibid.* It is arguable that this representation of Tjibaou tends to partially obscure his political engagement for Kanak independence in favour of an emphasis on Tjibaou’s ‘universal humanism’.

³³² ‘Michel Rocard qui dépêcha sur place une mission du dialogue quand ce dernier n’existait plus. [...] Ecouter Michel Rocard, c’est se remémorer une poignée de main historique’: *ibid.* This construction linking Rocard to the Tjibaou–Lafleur ‘*poignée de main*’ tends to foreground the role of the French State in the associated processes, rather than that of the local actors and the communities they represent.

³³³ ‘Signer à Nouméa, c’est déplacer le centre des décisions vers le cœur des acteurs’: *ibid.*

³³⁴ ‘[U]n paraphe au bas d’un document, c’est parfois un acte de courage’: *ibid.* Note the representation of the Noumea Accord’s Preamble in terms of the ‘full recognition’ of ‘Kanak identity’ (see discussion above). Note also that of the contemporary local political actors engaged in the process taking place, only Lafleur is acknowledged (and so foregrounded) in this editorial. The contemporary pro-independence Kanak actors and signatories to the Noumea Accord are ignored.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

d'exemple.³³⁶ This conclusion is also emphasised through the editorial's headline: '[u]ne France exemplaire'.³³⁷

An interview with Jospin conducted by Fléaux published in the newspaper's previous edition raised many of the same ideas and themes elaborated in this editorial, including the references to Jospin's project to construct '*une « France exemplaire »*', integrating (on Fléaux's characterisation) '*l'égalité des chances, la disparition des injustices, la tolérance*', and the (inherently political and strategic) affirmation of French republican values through, in this earlier instance, the identification by Jospin himself of the Noumea Accord's Preamble as recognising the (posited) fact that '*les valeurs républicaines n'ont pas toujours été respectées en Nouvelle-Calédonie*'.³³⁸

Fléaux's representation in his editorial of the CCT as a 'symbol' of such French Republican (Western liberal democratic) values and of the project of constructing a so-called '*France exemplaire*', through which France is projected to become an international leader and example, echoes the discussion above and in Annex 5 of the Centre's modernist architecture and the project's potential implication in a French nationalist agenda. This editorial relatively explicitly inscribes the CCT's symbolism and significance (in addition to the symbolism and significance of the Noumea Accord

³³⁶ Ibid. Note that this can be seen to resonate with comments made by Lafleur in relation to the Noumea Accord agreement in an interview later in May. Lafleur is cited by LNC as affirming that, '*dans vingt ans, la Calédonie réglera ses propres problèmes mais appartiendra toujours à l'ensemble français. C'est bien pour tout le monde et pour tous les Mélanésien indépendantistes, [...] car, avec la République française, la Calédonie pourra aller jusqu'au bout de son expérience de vraie démocratie*': Michaël Guillon, 'Le président du RPCR commente les accords de Nouméa – Jacques Lafleur : « Un contrat d'amitié à long terme »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 14/05/1998, 3. See also Elizabeth Nouar and Nicolas Vignoles, 'JACQUES LAFLEUR ET LES ACCORDS DE NOUMÉA – « S'EMANCIPER SANS S'ELOIGNER... »', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 533, 22-27/05/1998, 6-7. In his speech on the occasion of the signing of the Noumea Accord, Lafleur also maintained that New Caledonia is to now become '*actrice et non spectatrice de son destin. Elle devra répondre à cette marquée de confiance qui lui est donnée en s'efforçant de devenir pour la France un sujet de fierté*': Michaël Guillon, 'Jacques Lafleur : « Construire une Calédonie dans laquelle chacun se reconnaisse »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 06/05/1998, 5; Elizabeth Nouar and Emmanuel Jeanjean, 'JACQUES LAFLEUR AUX JEUNES CALÉDONIENS – « C'est votre accord ! »', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 531, 07-13/05/1998, 7.

³³⁷ Didier Fléaux, 'Une France exemplaire', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 1.

³³⁸ Didier Fléaux, 'Un entretien exclusif avec Les Nouvelles calédoniennes – Lionel Jospin : « L'accord de Nouméa est solide »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 4.

agreement itself) in such an agenda. While this discursive inscription of the CCT is not as readily apparent in the newspaper's other coverage of the Centre and its inauguration, it has particular force given that, as highlighted by van Dijk, the main function of editorials as a distinct genre of news discourse 'is to formulate the newspaper's official opinion'.³³⁹

Nevertheless, in the coverage of the inauguration published in this edition's special supplement, such an inscription is both less explicit and less 'hegemonic' (by reason of the multiplicity of voices and discourses contained therein). On the supplement's front page, prominence is given to a quotation attributed to Jospin in which the Kanak 'referent' of the CCT is foregrounded.³⁴⁰ However, the socio-political symbolism of the CCT in the Noumea Accord context is implicitly foregrounded in another passage of text on this page, which affirms that the Centre '*est devenu hier le symbole forte de la reconnaissance de la culture kanak et du chemin que vont devoir parcourir ensemble les communautés du pays*'.³⁴¹ This same phrase is also reproduced on the following page as one of the lead dot-points published at the head of the main article on the inauguration.³⁴² The second lead dot-point also affirms that the '*inauguration a été empreinte du souvenir de Jean-Marie Tjibaou et de Yeiwéné Yeiwéné et l'événement lié à la signature des accords de Nouméa*'.³⁴³ The political inscription of the inauguration is similarly highlighted in this article's main text in the following terms:

[L]'événement a bien évidemment eu aussi une dimension politique, dix ans après les accords de Matignon. Les coutumiers ont souligné que les esprits de Jean-Marie Tjibaou et de Yeiwéné Yeiwéné étaient sur le site.

³³⁹ Van Dijk (1993: 265).

³⁴⁰ '« Vous avez réussi à écrire dans la matière l'identité kanake »'. 'Le Centre Tjibaou inauguré', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 25.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Jacquotte Sampérez et al., 'Pour la première fois, un nom a été donné coutumièrement à un bâtiment avec l'approbation de toutes les grandes chefferies – Une page d'histoire de la coutume et de la politique du pays', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 26. Note, however, that on this instance the adjective 'kanak' is made to agree in gender.

³⁴³ Ibid.

« Tjibaou était un homme kanak et un citoyen du monde », a dit le Premier ministre. « Il nous faut digérer ce passé douloureux » a encore dit Roch Wamytan, président du FLNKS.³⁴⁴

The following, final section of this article's text draws on the discourse pronounced by Lafleur during the inauguration. Lafleur is firstly cited in relation to his recollections of Tjibaou.³⁴⁵ The newspaper goes on to state that Lafleur '*a également fait part de son vœu de voir le Centre s'ouvrir aux autres cultures.*'³⁴⁶ While this wish might be understood as a critique of the predominantly Kanak focus and orientation of the CCT, the discursive context within which Lafleur's comment is embedded in this article tends to diffuse its critical potential – not only does the subheading to this section ('*[I]a porte ouverte aux autres cultures*') suggest that the CCT already embodies an openness to other cultures, the sentence immediately following that in which Lafleur's wish is expressed affirms: '*[c]'est ce nouveau chapitre qu'ouvrira l'ADCK dès le mois prochain, lorsque les portes du Centre s'ouvriront au grand public.*'³⁴⁷ Nevertheless, this characterisation of the CCT's openness – correlating to its literal opening to the public – remains relatively minimal in terms of the active inclusion of local non-Kanak people and communities in the CCT project.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ '*« Il savait que cette poignée de main serait lourde à gérer, mais importante pour l'avenir. Il avait raison sur tous les points »*': *ibid.*

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid. This representation of the CCT's openness finds an echo in Togna's comments in 2008: '*la reconnaissance de la culture kanak n'avait de sens que dans l'ouverture aux autres. Ce n'est pas en restant entre nous que nous pouvions y parvenir, mais au contraire en adoptant une position réceptive par rapport à ceux qui nous environnaient. [...] Si nous ne sommes qu'entre nous, il n'y a pas besoin d'ADCK, de centre culturel*': Togna (2008a: 25). Note also the reproduction by LNC at the end of May 1998 of Togna's editorial in *La Lettre* of the CCT (no. 6, May–June 1998, 1) in which he affirms: '*[I]a définition du Centre culturel en fait un lieu pluriel d'expression de la culture kanake [spelt 'kanak' in the original] mais également un lieu ouvert aux autres cultures et en priorité à celles du Pacifique*'; and that '*[I]e Centre culturel est un formidable pari. Hier, nous avons failli ne plus exister, aujourd'hui nous nous affirmons. Demain, nous vous accueillerons pour que vous entendiez une parole nouvelle.*' This 'openness' is, moreover, foregrounded by LNC through the citation attributed to Togna in this article's headline ('*« [n]ous voulons faire du Centre culturel Tjibaou un lieu ouvert aux autres cultures du Pacifique et du monde »*') and the last of the subheadings inserted into the text ('*[u]n lieu ouvert aux autres cultures*'). Michel Martin, 'Octave Togna, directeur du Centre culturel – *« Nous voulons faire du Centre culturel Tjibaou un lieu ouvert aux autres cultures du Pacifique et du monde »*', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 30/05/1998, 7.

The representation of the CCT as open and inclusive and the inscription of this discourse in the broader political context of the signing of the Noumea Accord is also apparent in the lengthy extracts from the speeches delivered on the 4 May by Lionel Jospin, Jacques Lafleur, Rock Wamytan and Marie-Claude Tjibaou reproduced by LNC over two pages in its special supplement.³⁴⁸ The headline of these two pages not only indicates the common themes running through these speeches,³⁴⁹ but especially foregrounds the construction of the CCT as ‘*[u]n moyen de construire la paix*’ (drawn principally from Jospin’s address).³⁵⁰

Heading the extracts from Jospin’s speech is the citation: ‘« *[l]a double vocation du Centre culturel* »’.³⁵¹ The lead paragraph printed above the extracts runs:

*[p]our le Premier ministre Lionel Jospin, Jean-Marie Tjibaou avait vu juste. Maintenant que la culture kanake est pleinement reconnue, elle peut s’ouvrir à d’autres, afin que « le dialogue des cultures devienne un moyen de construire la paix ». L’Etat, qui a, dès l’origine, soutenu le projet, continuera à remplir son rôle.*³⁵²

The theme of the opening of Kanak culture to others is also emphasised through the reproduction of the following quotation in an inset in bold in this article: ‘***[p]leinement reconnue, la culture kanake peut alors s’ouvrir à d’autres***’.³⁵³ This phrase is also reproduced in the body of the extracts from Jospin’s speech, followed by the phrase also previously cited in the lead paragraph: ‘*[l]e dialogue des cultures devient ainsi un moyen de construire la paix*’.³⁵⁴ In the conclusion of his address, represented by the

³⁴⁸ Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Des discours en hommage à la mémoire de Jean-Marie Tjibaou et qui soulignent l’œuvre exceptionnelle – Un moyen de construire la paix’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 30-31.

³⁴⁹ These common themes are the ‘*hommage à la mémoire de Jean-Marie Tjibaou*’ and the recognition of ‘*l’œuvre exceptionnelle*’ accomplished by Piano: *ibid.*, 30.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

³⁵¹ Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Lionel Jospin, Premier ministre : « La double vocation du Centre culturel »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 30.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

newspaper as '*un message d'espoir*', Jospin is cited as positively affirming that: '*[l]es populations de Nouvelle-Calédonie vont maintenant s'approprier cet espace.*'³⁵⁵

Based on the extracts reproduced by the newspaper, Jospin devotes considerable attention to the political and cultural engagement of Tjibaou in his speech, indicating the interconnection of the two and invoking the long history of '*incompréhension [...] à l'origine de graves conflits qui opposèrent dans le passé les Kanaks aux autres communautés ou à l'administration française*', including in the country's more recent past.³⁵⁶ The CCT is inscribed by Jospin within the broader, political and social process engaged since 1988 in favour of reconciliation between the country's inhabitants and the construction of peace.

While Jospin's discourse tends to relatively unquestioningly affirm the opening of Kanak culture and the CCT towards other cultures, the discourse articulated by Lafleur tends to frame this as an injunction – as something that should happen but that potentially may not, rather than something that is already happening or will unquestionably and necessarily happen in the immediate future. Moreover, this is the element of Lafleur's speech that is given the most prominence by LNC.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Brown maintains that '[m]any speeches at the May 4th inauguration, including that of Prime Minister Jospin, went deftly' in the direction of replacing 'Tjibaou the politician calling for independence [...] by the image of the promoter of his culture', and thereby of replacing the political by the cultural: Brown (1998: 134). While elements of Jospin's speech might be read in this manner, others clearly affirm the interconnection between the political and the cultural in Tjibaou's engagement. Thus, according to LNC's report: '*Tjibaou « nous enseigne que tout combat politique a une dimension culturelle » car c'est le sentiment de la négation de l'identité culturelle kanake qui est à l'origine de sa révolte », a affirmé le Premier ministre en rappelant que les manifestations culturelles qu'il avait organisées dès 1975 avaient été des « étapes dans la prise de conscience politique des Kanaks ».*' Jacquotte Sampérez et al., 'Lionel Jospin, Premier ministre : « La double vocation du Centre culturel »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 30. See also the discussion below.

³⁵⁷ It is highlighted in the main article on the inauguration published in the supplement (as seen above); it appears in the citation in the heading of the extracts of Lafleur's speech – '*« [l]e Centre devra s'ouvrir à l'expression des autres cultures »*'; and this same phrase is also reproduced in the extracts from the speech. See Jacquotte Sampérez et al., 'Pour la première fois, un nom a été donné coutumièrement à un bâtiment avec l'approbation de toutes les grandes chefferies – Une page d'histoire de la coutume et de la politique du pays', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 26; Jacquotte Sampérez et al., 'Jacques Lafleur : « Le Centre devra s'ouvrir à l'expression des autres cultures »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 30.

Lafleur opens his speech with an account of Tjibaou and their 1998 '*poignée de main*', attributed by Lafleur with having ultimately caused Tjibaou's death. But Lafleur nevertheless affirms that this handshake constituted a '*signe d'espoir*' and provided the conditions for the subsequent period of peace and the signing of the Noumea Accord. LNC indicates that Lafleur then evoked Tjibaou's '*engagement politique*' in the following terms:

*[p]our lui, c'est la non-reconnaissance et l'absence de dialogue qui conduisent à la révolte. Il avait foi en la possibilité d'instaurer un dialogue plus profond et plus suivi entre la culture européenne et la culture autochtone. Son rêve était qu'en l'an 2000 le profil culturel du Calédonien comporterait aussi bien des éléments de la culture européenne que de la culture autochtone.*³⁵⁸

In this passage, Lafleur draws directly on Tjibaou's own discourse, articulated in 1974 in relation to the *Mélanésie 2000* project.³⁵⁹

Moreover, Lafleur goes on to position himself as supportive of this perspective, when he continues:

*[c]e rêve ne sera peut-être pas pleinement atteint dans deux ans [...] mais l'accord de Nouméa crée les conditions politiques et le Centre Jean-Marie Tjibaou fournit les moyens nécessaires à la poursuite et à l'approfondissement de ce dialogue entre les deux principales cultures présentes sur le Territoire.*³⁶⁰

In this manner, the Noumea Accord and the CCT are represented as having complimentary roles to play in the pursuit of this political project and engagement.³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ Jacquotte Sampérez et al., 'Jacques Lafleur: « Le Centre devra s'ouvrir à l'expression des autres cultures »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 30.

³⁵⁹ Tjibaou in Missotte (1995b: 66-67). See the discussion in Chapter One.

³⁶⁰ Jacquotte Sampérez et al., 'Jacques Lafleur: « Le Centre devra s'ouvrir à l'expression des autres cultures »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 30.

³⁶¹ Moreover, in an article published earlier in the same edition of LNC, in which Lafleur's comments in relation to the Noumea Accord made after his meeting with Jospin in the morning on the 4 May are reproduced, the paper notes that '[a]u passage, M. Lafleur a estimé que le préambule de l'accord représente « une marche en avant pour promouvoir cette compréhension mutuelle. Ce préambule est tel

However, it is significant to note that the radical nature of the political message and project articulated implicitly through *Mélanésie 2000*, implicating the decolonisation of New Caledonian society through its refoundation and reformulation on specifically Kanak terms,³⁶² is occluded in Lafleur's appropriation of Tjibaou's discourse. Lafleur's support for Tjibaou's political engagement can consequently be seen to be highly selective and strategic.

Significantly, at a later point in his speech, Lafleur's comments can be seen to suggest that the CCT's openness to the country's non-Kanak communities still remains to be turned into a reality:

*[L]e Centre devra s'ouvrir à l'expression des autres cultures présentes sur le Territoire, [...] pour poursuivre et approfondir cette reconnaissance mutuelle et ce dialogue. C'est d'ailleurs la condition pour que l'ensemble de la population se l'approprie et le fréquente.*³⁶³

Moreover, as indicated by LNC itself, '*Lafleur va plus loin dans son analyse*', in affirming that the CCT:

*a également une vocation régionale et internationale. Il me semble que tout en étant l'instrument de rayonnement de la culture kanake, il doit être aussi un pôle de présence et de développement de la francophonie dans le Pacifique. En effet, le français peut être le vecteur privilégié d'accès à la culture kanake. C'est en tout cas, un vœu que je formule ici.*³⁶⁴

que l'on reconnaît volontiers que la prise en compte de la culture et la dignité des Mélanésien est une chose nécessaire pour que ce pays vive en paix ». Michaël Guillon, 'Jacques Lafleur : « Les Accords ne laissent personne sur le côté »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 5.

³⁶² See the discussion in Chapter One.

³⁶³ Jacquotte Sampérez et al., 'Jacques Lafleur : « Le Centre devra s'ouvrir à l'expression des autres cultures »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 30.

³⁶⁴ Ibid. Note that Lafleur's use of the term '*kanak*' (or one of its variants) in his speech (a usage also confirmed by the extracts reproduced by LNH) is relatively exceptional.

These comments affirming the CCT's inscription in a regional '*francophonie*' project (which are particularly foregrounded by LNC)³⁶⁵ and the important role of the French language in facilitating 'external' access to Kanak culture can be seen to have implications for the nature of the politics of Kanak culture and identity engaged through the CCT project, which is overlaid with and potentially subsumed within a politics of French culture and identity. This is further reinforced by Lafleur's insistence in his speech on the role of the French State in the CCT project, which, he affirms, '*nous devons [...] à la générosité de la France et des ministres charges de la Culture.*'³⁶⁶ The potential inscription of the CCT project in a French nationalist project, and certainly in a 'loyalist' New Caledonian project, are consequently implicitly apparent in Lafleur's speech.³⁶⁷

While Rock Wamytan's speech for the inauguration acknowledges the role of the French State in the realisation of the CCT project (and, moreover, Lafleur's role in the peaceful political process engaged successfully in New Caledonia since 1988), his discourse can be distinguished from that of Lafleur by its Kanak/New Caledonian nationalist inscription and its appropriation of the discourse of the Noumea Accord. Thus, LNC reports that Wamytan began by evoking:

les cicatrices de l'histoire, d'une Nouvelle-Calédonie construite sur le sang et les larmes. « En ce jour de commémoration [referring

³⁶⁵ Lafleur's affirmation that the CCT '*doit être un pôle de présence et de développement de la francophonie*' is among the citations reproduced as an inset in bold in this article, and this proposition is also foregrounded by the newspaper in the lead paragraph introducing summarising Lafleur's address, which is represented by the paper as having been a '*discours très réaliste*'. The summary runs: '*[L]e Centre Tjibaou est une réalisation exceptionnelle qui a vu le jour grâce à la générosité de la France. Instrument de rayonnement de la culture kanake, il devra aussi être un pôle de développement de la francophonie dans le Pacifique, de même qu'un centre d'intérêt touristique de dimension internationale*': *ibid.*

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁷ Note that in this edition's coverage of the political meetings of Jospin with local representatives, LNC indicates that Lafleur '*a [...] redit son espoir que la consultation qui sera organisée dans vingt ans « sera en faveur du maintien de la Nouvelle-Calédonie dans la République » car, a-t-il ajouté, « c'est bien pour les Mélanésien et pour toutes les communautés qui vivent ici ».*' Michaël Guillon, 'Jacques Lafleur : « Les Accords ne laissent personne sur le côté »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 5.

specifically to both the 1988 and 1989 Ouvéa tragedies], *on ne peut passer sous silence ce passé douloureux qu'il nous faut digérer entièrement avant d'envisager l'avenir autrement.* » Il faut « lever la tête, identifier et positionner les responsabilités de chacun des acteurs de ces drames afin de pouvoir se dire « plus jamais ça » et avancer dans la construction de ce pays, façonnant une communauté de destin pour un peuple en devenir ». ³⁶⁸

Wamytan's advocacy of the acknowledgement of and assumption of responsibility for the conflicts and wrongs of the past so as to aid the present and future construction of a '*communauté de destin*' draws directly on the discourse of the Noumea Accord (its Preamble in particular) and its political project to create in New Caledonia a peaceful '*communauté humain affirmant son destin commun*' into the future.³⁶⁹ However, there is a certain ambiguity introduced by Wamytan's reformulation of this project as that of constructing a '*communauté de destin pour un peuple en devenir*', given that, in the terms of the Noumea Accord itself, only one 'people' is expressly recognised: the 'Kanak people'.

This recognition of the existence of the 'Kanak people' is, moreover, a radical development in the context of French law, particularly given the Noumea Accord's effective incorporation into the French Constitution. As highlighted by Mathias Chauchat, this recognition can be directly contrasted to the position articulated in 1991 by France's *Conseil constitutionnel* when it judged legislation referring to the '*peuple corse*' as a '*composante du peuple français*' as contrary to the French Constitution which '*ne connaît que le peuple français, composé de tous les citoyens français sans distinction d'origine, de race ou de religion*'. ³⁷⁰ As this suggests, the concept of

³⁶⁸ Jacquotte Sampérez et al., 'Rock Wamytan, président du FLNKS « Il ne faut pas que ce Centre soit un gadget moderne, superflu »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 31.

³⁶⁹ *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*, 'Préambule', point 4. This also resonates with the discursive framing of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative by its organisers from 2003, discussed in Chapter Three.

³⁷⁰ *Conseil constitutionnel, décision n° 91-290 DC du 9 mai 1991, Loi portant statut de la collectivité territoriale de Corse*, cited in Chauchat (2009: 2).

‘people’ in such contexts often has connotations of ‘nation’. According to Chanter, the category of ‘the people’, most often qualified as ‘the indigenous people’ or ‘the Kanak people’, as it developed in Kanak nationalist discourse from the 1970s was generally constructed as ‘a category of the past, grounded in an articulation of “the people” as the “original people”, a pre-colonial construct imbued with apolitical authenticity’, although some constructions acknowledged the role of colonisation and colonial processes in the emergence of pan-Kanak socio-political unity and a collective Kanak consciousness of ‘peoplehood’.³⁷¹ In the terms of the Noumea Accord, the ‘Kanak people’ is similarly constructed primarily in reference to Kanak indigeneity and ‘Kanak identity’, associated with the pre-colonial past.

In contrast, Wamytan’s reference to ‘*un peuple en devenir*’ does not take the past as the primary point of reference and legitimation for the constitution of this ‘people’. Regardless of Wamytan’s appropriation later in his speech of Tjibaou’s discourse regarding Kanak identity as being ‘*devant nous*’, this suggests that his reference to ‘*un peuple en devenir*’ designates a category of ‘people’ broader than the ‘Kanak people’ and projected as existing in the future, and potentially implicitly correlating to an independent ‘nation’ similarly projected as existing in the future, in line with one of the potential outcomes of the Noumea Accord process.³⁷²

This conclusion is confirmed by quotations from Wamytan published in another article earlier in the same edition of LNC in which he directly addresses the Noumea Accord agreement. In this earlier article, Wamytan clearly affirms the finality of the Accord as the ‘political emancipation’ of the country and identifies the agreement as allowing for

³⁷¹ Chanter (1996: 127). For a discussion of the emergence of the ‘Kanak people’ in Kanak nationalist discourse from the 1970s, see *ibid.*, 127-129.

³⁷² Note that at this early stage, neither the pro- nor the anti-independence local signatories to the Noumea Accord appear to have appropriated and mobilised the category of local ‘citizenship’ in their political discourse.

*'la constitution d'un peuple calédonien, dont le noyau dur sera le peuple kanak puisqu'il tend la main aux autres communautés'.*³⁷³

Seemingly in keeping with this emphasis on the primary position, role and agency of the 'Kanak people' in the political process engaged through the Noumea Accord, LNC reports on Wamytan's speech during the CCT's inauguration:

*[I] 'identité du peuple kanak est à construire. Pour Roch Wamytan « c'est à nous qu'il revient de remplir les pages de notre histoire à venir. Personne d'autre ne le fera à notre place. C'est le défi qui se pose à nous, c'est le pari sur l'intelligence des hommes qui se poursuit depuis juin 1988 et qui revient de prendre un nouvel élan avec la signature des accords de Nouméa, scellés officiellement demain avec le Premier ministre ».*³⁷⁴

However, despite the newspaper's framing of this citation in terms of the identity of the Kanak people, Wamytan's discourse could be seen to also relate to and include all of New Caledonia's established inhabitants recognised and implicated in the present socio-political process, in continuity with the 1988 agreement.

Wamytan is next cited as affirming that:

[I] 'inauguration de ce Centre consacre définitivement la reconnaissance de la culture kanake. Demain, c'est aussi l'identité kanake qui sera au centre du dispositif institutionnel et cet ensemble culturel constituera un formidable levier qui fera en sorte que ce qui a été arrêté aux accords de

³⁷³ Michaël Guillon, 'Roch Wamytan : « Ces Accords reflètent le projet du FLNKS »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 5. This can be contrasted to Lafleur's comments made on the occasion of the Noumea Accord's official signing – LNC cites Lafleur as affirming that the period covered by the Accord 'est le temps nécessaire pour qu'émerge progressivement, à partir de l'identité reconnue de chacun, le sentiment de plus en plus fort, pour les habitants de ce Territoire, de partager un même destin.' Michaël Guillon, 'Jacques Lafleur : « Construire une Calédonie dans laquelle chacun se reconnaisse »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 06/05/1998, 5.

³⁷⁴ Jacquotte Sampérez et al., 'Rock Wamytan, président du FLNKS « Il ne faut pas que ce Centre soit un gadget moderne, superflu »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 31.

*Nouméa ne soit relégué au stade de vœux pieux ou reste lettres
mortes !³⁷⁵*

Significantly, in this passage Wamytan identifies both the CCT and the provisions relating to ‘Kanak identity’ in the Noumea Accord as concrete outcomes and tools through which the concrete realisation of the Noumea Accord agreement itself (presumably including the potential ultimate accession of the country to full independence at the end of the Accord process) can be ensured, rather than simply as symbols or symbolic aspects of the agreement. In this regard, the potential Kanak nationalist discursive orientation and framing of the CCT project is perpetuated through its resonance with the the recognition and restitution of ‘Kanak identity’ in the discursive context of the Noumea Accord.³⁷⁶

Despite the frequent political inflection of Wamytan’s discourse articulated during the CCT’s inauguration, the way in which LNC frames its coverage of Wamytan’s speech tends to occlude this broader political inscription through an emphasis on his discussion of Kanak culture and identity, ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’.³⁷⁷

The final speech made during the CCT’s inauguration to be covered by LNC through the reproduction of extracts is that delivered by Marie-Claude Tjibaou as the President

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid. Moreover, in contrast to Lafleur’s discourse regarding ‘la francophonie’ in connection with the CCT, Wamytan talks of Kanak culture as having in the contemporary context to ‘faire face aux cultures européennes’, which would seem to include French culture, ‘et à l’agression de la culture américaine, celle que Jack Lang appelle « la machine à raboter les cultures »’, with one of the means of doing so being the Kanak appropriation of the CCT itself.

³⁷⁷ This article is headed by the citation ‘« [i]l ne faut pas que ce Centre soit un gadget moderne, superflu »’; the lead paragraph runs ‘[a]près avoir évoqué les cicatrices de l’histoire, Rock Wamytan, président du FLNKS, a rendu hommage à Jean-Marie Tjibaou. Le président du FLNKS demeure confiant sur les capacités de la culture kanake à demeurer fidèle à ses fondements tout en s’inscrivant dans la modernité’; and the three passages of text inset in bold run: ‘« [l]e retour à la tradition est un mythe. L’identité est devant nous »’, ‘« [c]ette culture sera évolutive ou elle devra disparaître »’, ‘« [b]ien que chahuté, la culture kanake a su résister et demeurer fidèle à ses fondements »’: *ibid.*

of the ADCK's *Conseil d'administration*.³⁷⁸ The newspaper notes her emphasis on the symbolic nature of the CCT's inauguration on the anniversary of the deaths of Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Yeiwéné Yeiwéné, coinciding with the end of the Matignon Accords and the signing of the Noumea Accord. The paper quotes Marie-Claude Tjibaou directly as stating '[j] 'y vois un signe fort', explained in the following terms:

« [L]ors des accords de la rue Oudinot, Jean-Marie Tjibaou souhaitait la création de l'ADCK. [«]Nous ne sommes des vestiges archéologiques, mais des hommes de chair et de sang » répétait-il à l'envi. L'ADCK a pour philosophie d'inscrire à Nouméa, la culture kanake comme référence identitaire au pays ». Le centre a pour but de « favoriser la création artistique, permettre aux Kanaks de retrouver leurs racines, participer à trouver en Nouvelle-Calédonie une identité commune, une ouverture sur le monde. Ce centre culturel est le symbole de cette ambition ». ³⁷⁹

While this discourse is not expressly inscribed in that of the Noumea Accord, Marie-Claude Tjibaou's references to the CCT/ADCK's goals of inscribing 'Kanak culture' as the '*référence identitaire au pays*' and of participating in the creation of '*une identité commune*' in New Caledonia can be seen to echo certain readings and constructions of that political agreement. They also echo the comments made by Togna reproduced by LNC on the 4 May (discussed above).³⁸⁰ However, these elements of Marie-Claude Tjibaou's address relating to questions of Kanak and New Caledonian culture and identity are not foregrounded by the newspaper, which emphasises rather her comments

³⁷⁸ Jacquotte Sampérez et al., 'Marie-Claude Tjibaou, président de l'ADCK « Tenons le cap de la qualité »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 31. Note that while this is the last article published on the two pages devoted to these speeches, Marie-Claude's address was actually delivered first on the day. Jospin's speech is covered first, under which appears the treatment of Lafleur's address; Wamytan and Tjibaou's speeches are treated on the second page. The extracts from Marie-Claude Tjibaou's speech are substantially shorter than those from the political representatives.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Olivier Bonetti, 'Questions à... Octave Togna, directeur général de l'ADCK – « Nous avons une obligation de qualité, par respect pour ceux qui ont financé ce projet »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 7.

relating to the need of the ADCK to ‘*tenir le cap de la qualité*’³⁸¹ and to the fact that the centre represents ‘*une synthèse des ambitions de Jean-Marie Tjibaou*’.³⁸²

While a certain continuity can be seen to exist between Marie-Claude Tjibaou’s discourse articulated during the inauguration and the discourse articulated in the Noumea Accord, in an article relating to a meeting of the New Caledonian *Comité économique et social* (CES)³⁸³ published by LNC in the period between the official inauguration of the CCT in May and its public opening in June, Marie-Claude Tjibaou (a CES member) is cited as questioning the role of the ADCK in the changed local political context. According to this article, she identified the current ‘preoccupation’ of the ADCK as meeting local politicians

*« pour savoir si, avec le centre Tjibaou, l’Agence continue de fonctionner avec le même objet que celui défini par la loi référendaire de 1988 » (la mise en valeur de la culture kanake). « Quelles sont les missions que nous donnent aujourd’hui les politiques ? », s’est interrogée Mme Tjibaou, expliquant notamment que les accords de Nouméa « replacent l’identité kanake au centre du dispositif, mais qu’ils ouvrent aussi une période de 15-20 ans pour construire ensemble le pays ».*³⁸⁴

This article notes further that the CES itself ‘a émis le vœu que le Centre Tjibaou devienne, à terme, « l’outil qui favorisera le développement culturel artistique de tous les Calédoniens »’.³⁸⁵

³⁸¹ This is emphasised in the article’s heading and lead paragraph. Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Marie-Claude Tjibaou, président de l’ADCK « Tenons le cap de la qualité »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 31.

³⁸² This phrase appears indented and in bold in the text: *ibid.* Recall the critical analysis of the newspaper’s emphasis on these issues above.

³⁸³ The *Comité économique et social* was consultative local institution created pursuant to the Matignon Accords agreement that would become the *Conseil économique et social* pursuant to the Noumea Accord agreement.

³⁸⁴ ‘Quel rôle pour l’ADCK ?’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/05/1998, 3.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

On the other hand, despite the question raised by Marie-Claude Tjibaou and reported in this article, LNC reports in another article on the same page that ‘*Mme Tjibaou a expliqué que les visiteurs du centre culturel s’apercevront, dès le 16 juin prochain, que l’ADCK a travaillé « dans le sens » des accords de Nouméa.*’³⁸⁶ She is also quoted as maintaining that, ‘*« [a]u travers des collections présentées, nous avons pris en compte la dimension qui consiste à construire ensemble ce pays ».*’³⁸⁷ No further explanation of or commentary is given on this point.

By 2008, the tenth anniversary of the CCT’s inauguration, the Centre’s inscription in the dynamic of the Noumea Accord is unambiguously posited and affirmed by representatives of the ADCK such as Marie-Claude Tjibaou and Jean-Pierre Deteix in interviews published in *Mwà Vée*. Thus, without further explanation or concrete illustration, Marie-Claude Tjibaou is quoted as affirming that the CCT building itself ‘*est la synthèse du préambule de l’Accord de Nouméa.*’³⁸⁸ Deteix is cited as affirming in slightly more detailed terms that:

*[i]l y a une continuité complète entre l’institution ADCK, le CCT et le préambule de l’Accord de Nouméa. Il y a aussi continuité entre le projet du CCT, son architecture, les programmes culturels et le préambule, et, en ce sens-là, le CCT est effectivement un acteur du destin commun.*³⁸⁹

Later in the same interview, Deteix is quoted as stating that:

[i]l faut que le Centre reste un lieu de référence de la culture de cette terre. [...] Si l’on veut dire aux autres venez vous joindre à nous, il faut un lieu de référence. C’est le sens du passage consacré à la culture dans le préambule de l’Accord de Nouméa. Et je pense que le CCT est devenu

³⁸⁶ ‘Voté hier par le Comité économique et social – Un vœu pour promouvoir l’art en Calédonie’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/05/1998, 3.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Marie-Claude Tjibaou (2008: 16).

³⁸⁹ Deteix (2008: 30).

*un lieu de référence commun à tous les habitants du pays. L'ouverture aux autres est en marche.*³⁹⁰

This passage can be seen to resonate with parts of Marie-Claude Tjibaou's speech made during the inauguration in 1998. It also resonates with the official '*présentation*' of the CCT project which appears on the current CCT/ADCK website, according to which the CCT '*se veut un lieu d'identification de la culture kanak et de son pays*': '*il affirme l'identité kanak comme référence, tant pour la société kanak que pour l'ensemble des communautés du pays.*'³⁹¹

Such representations of the CCT can be seen to resonate in certain respects with the Noumea Accord's construction of the '*signes identitaires du pays*' (its name, flag, anthem, motto and bank note designs) to be '*recherchés en commun pour exprimer l'identité kanak et le futur partagé entre tous*',³⁹² although these '*signes identitaires*' are more directly 'political' in character by reason of their traditional close 'national' association and symbolism, and the fact that these local '*signes identitaires*' are to entirely replace the equivalent French national symbols should New Caledonia accede to full independence at the end of the Noumea Accord process.³⁹³

As discussed in Chapter Three in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* (identified by some as itself constituting a '*signe identitaire du pays*' in the spirit of the Noumea Accord) and in Annex 15, the precise character to be given to these '*signes identitaires*', particularly in terms of the prominence that is or should be given to the representation of Kanak culture and identity, to local non-Kanak cultures and identities, or to a potentially shared culture and identity, remains highly controversial and contested. This issue can be seen to present a concrete example of the difficulties and contestation stemming from the tension inherent to the Noumea Accord's construction of the category of equal local

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 36.

³⁹¹ CCT/ADCK, 'Présentation : L'Agence de développement de la culture kanak : Projet architectural', 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/lagence-de-developpement-de-la-culture-kanak/projet-architectural>>.

³⁹² *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*, 'Document d'orientation', point 1.5.

³⁹³ Ibid., 'Préambule', point 5.

‘citizenship’ as conditioned by the recognition and restitution of Kanak culture and identity.³⁹⁴

Similar tensions are identifiable in CCT project and its representation as affirming *‘l’identité kanak comme référence, tant pour la société kanak que pour l’ensemble des communautés du pays.’*³⁹⁵ However, as can be seen from the discussion above, these tensions and issues are not foregrounded or, indeed, readily apparent from the contemporaneous coverage of the CCT’s inauguration published by LNC, which tends overall to represent the CCT in positive, inclusive and consensual terms and which generally leaves any tensions in the discursive representation of the CCT’s nature and significance by various actors (and, indeed, by its own journalists) ‘latent’ in the text on its pages. One notable exception is the newspaper’s publication of the criticisms of the CCT’s inauguration voiced by Raphaël Mapou and Simon Loueckhote after the event, although these criticisms are framed as relating specifically to the inauguration’s Kanak ‘customary’ aspects, and consequently do not directly raise the question of the CCT’s inclusion (or otherwise) of the country’s non-Kanak communities.

Some indication of a local awareness of and sensitivity to the tensions and issues relating to the representational politics of the CCT as a predominantly and specifically Kanak, indigenous institution and symbol in the context of New Caledonia’s contemporary multi-ethnic society at this particular political juncture is, however, apparent from coverage of the inauguration published in some local papers other than LNC, particularly including LNH.

³⁹⁴ See the discussion in the Introduction.

³⁹⁵ CCT/ADCK, ‘Présentation : L’Agence de développement de la culture kanak : Projet architectural’, 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/lagence-de-developpement-de-la-culture-kanak/projet-architectural>>.

Coverage of the inauguration in other local papers

The limited coverage of the CCT's inauguration published by LNH is largely incorporated into its coverage of Jospin's visit to New Caledonia and the signing of the Noumea Accord.³⁹⁶ The potential significance of the CCT itself tends to be minimised and downplayed by this paper in its relatively cursory treatment of the inauguration. Moreover, in two political interviews published by the paper (with Jospin and Lafleur respectively), questions are posed that suggest the existence of a negative perception of the CCT and of the politics surrounding its inauguration as being exclusively pro-independence Kanak.

The interview with Jospin is comprised of extracts taken from his joint interview by (pro-independence, Kanak) *Radio Djido*, and ('loyalist', largely local 'European') *Radio Rythme Bleu*.³⁹⁷ RRB's journalist, Elizabeth Nouar (whose written articles are also frequently published in LNH), is cited as posing the following question to Jospin in relation to the Noumea Accord:

*[c]et accord est équilibré, mais derrière les signataires des accords, il y a des populations. Et derrière Jacques Lafleur, il y a une majorité qui, en confiance, a fait vivre les Accords de Matignon et s'apprête à s'engager dans les Accords de Nouméa. Dans votre visite et les discours, cette majorité n'est-elle pas un peu absente, un peu oubliée ?*³⁹⁸

Jospin, reported as having initially responded in surprise to this question, is quoted as stating as part of his response:

³⁹⁶ Focusing specifically on the inauguration, the paper published extracts from the speeches delivered by Jospin, Wamytan, Marie-Claude Tjibaou and Lafleur (with the most attention given to Lafleur) and five photographs, four with captions: 'Inauguration du Centre culturel Tjibaou', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 531, 07-13/05/1998, 6; 'DEUX JOURNEES QUI COMPTENT', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 531, 07-13/05/1998, 8. The paper also published a critical review of the coverage of the signing of the Noumea Accords and the CCT's inauguration in the metropolitan written press: Soizic Rouan, 'Lionel Jospin en Calédonie raconté par la presse métropolitaine', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 531, 07-13/05/1998, 2.

³⁹⁷ Elizabeth Nouar and Nicole Waïa, 'LIONEL JOSPIN INTERROGÉ PAR ELIZABETH NOUAR ET NICOLE WAÏA – « DANS MA VISION, IL Y A DE L'EQUILIBRE »', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 531, 07-13/05/1998, 4.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

*je suis venu pour la signature des accords, mais aussi pour l'inauguration du Centre Culturel Tjibaou et il y a cette insistance sur la reconnaissance d'une identité et d'une culture. Mais dans ma vision des choses, il y a de l'équilibre et je pense que ce sont toutes les communautés de Nouvelle-Calédonie qui doivent se sentir écoutées par le gouvernement, écoutées par Paris.*³⁹⁹

Jospin thus associates the emphasis on the recognition of Kanak culture and identity in the CCT's inauguration (as well as in the discourse and politics of the Noumea Accord) as possibly giving rise to a perception of the relative absence and neglect of the local 'loyalist' 'majority' in Jospin's visit and discourse, posited to exist by this journalist.

Similar issues are also raised directly in the interview with Lafleur published by LNH in a subsequent May edition, again composed of extracts from an interview with RRB.⁴⁰⁰

RRB is cited as asking Lafleur:

*[e]ntre le préambule et la surmédiation qui a entouré l'inauguration du Centre Culturel Tjibaou, certains, comme les Mélanésiens du Rassemblement, n'ont-ils pas pu ressentir un sentiment d'exclusion ?*⁴⁰¹

Lafleur is quoted as stating in part of his response:⁴⁰²

[a]lors, c'est vrai, on a inauguré le Centre Tjibaou qui est impressionnant ! Il est réellement magnifique. C'est l'hommage rendu à

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Elizabeth Nouar and Nicolas Vignoles, 'JACQUES LAFLEUR ET LES ACCORDS DE NOUMÉA – « S'EMANCIPER SANS S'ELOIGNER... »', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 533, 22-27/05/1998, 6-7.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁰² Note that Lafleur is quoted as firstly stating: '[p]ersonnellement, je trouve que les Mélanésiens du Rassemblement sont les mieux placés. [...] Ils appartiennent à un mouvement cohérent, solide et ils ont une vraie place. Ils n'ont pas derrière eux des parasites qui essayent de les exciter pour que les choses se passent mal. Moi, je crois que les Mélanésiens du Rassemblement, ce sont les meilleurs !' Ibid. Lafleur might be seen to implicitly represent pro-independence Kanak as belonging to an incoherent and unstable political movement, and as without 'une vraie place' in New Caledonian society. He more directly represents pro-independence Kanak as 'excitable' and susceptible to the negative influence and control of the 'external' agency of unidentified malicious actors, and as consequently potentially being led to create social disorder, conflict and potential violence. This discursive representation of pro-independence Kanak people can be seen to resonate strongly with certain racist colonial discourses relating to Kanak people and, in the country's more recent history, 'loyalist' discourses mobilised particularly during the period of 'les événements' in relation to pro-independence Kanak people, discussed in Chapter One.

*un homme qui a été à l'origine de la paix retrouvée sur le Territoire. Mais on en a trop fait ! Pendant 8 jours, on n'a vu que ça ! Et par moment, on voyait aussi des idées politiques et on ne savait plus si c'était la commémoration de la mort de Jean-Marie Tjibaou ou si on essayait de faire passer un message en faveur du FLNKS. Ce qui fait qu'aujourd'hui, les gens se demandent ce qui s'est passé exactement.*⁴⁰³

In this response, Lafleur effectively agrees with RRB's critical appraisal of the purported 'surmédiatisation' of the CCT's inauguration, which, combined with the posited pro-independence political inflection of parts of the event, is identified as having elicited some questions (and possibly feelings of 'exclusion') by some members of the New Caledonian population.

Another indication of the negative perception by some people belonging to the local 'European' population of the CCT as an exclusively Kanak-oriented 'cultural' initiative and institution appears in a short piece published by LCB in August 1998.⁴⁰⁴ This paragraph-long text is headed '[à] quand le centre Tonton Marcel ?' Tonton Marcel is the central figure in Bernard Berger's popular local comic book series, *La Brousse en Folie*. In this series, Tonton Marcel is the exaggerated stereotype of the New Caledonian 'broussard' and 'Caldoche'.⁴⁰⁵ LCB's text runs:

*Jean-Claude Mermoud interviewé par notre télé : « Le centre Jean-Marie Tjibaou !... C'est pas just na ! Il y a aussi une culture caldoche ... non pardon calédonienne. Il faut nous donner les moyens à nous aussi ! »*⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³ Lafleur also states: '[e]t je trouve qu'il y a eu une désinformation fabuleuse – comme je ne l'ai jamais vu – de la part de RFO.' Elizabeth Nouar and Nicolas Vignoles, 'JACQUES LAFLEUR ET LES ACCORDS DE NOUMÉA – « S'EMANCIPER SANS S'ELOIGNER... »', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 533, 22-27/05/1998, 7.

⁴⁰⁴ 'A quand le centre Tonton Marcel ?', *Le Chien bleu*, no. 3, 20/08/1998, 3.

⁴⁰⁵ See Berger (2003: 95).

⁴⁰⁶ 'A quand le centre Tonton Marcel ?', *Le Chien bleu*, no. 3, 20/08/1998, 3. Mermoud is the author of a book entitled *Mode de vie et culture caldoches*: Mermoud (1999).

In contrast, no critical perspectives are apparent from the coverage of the CCT's inauguration published by CLL and TDC. As seen above, the former paper emphasises the 'customary' inscription of the CCT's inauguration in its coverage. Indeed, immediately following the lead paragraph in bold at the head of the article, which affirms that '*[u]ne grande page de la tradition kanake a été écrite le 4 mai dernier lors de la cérémonie d'inauguration du Centre Culturel dont les bâtiments ont reçu coutumièrement le nom de Tjibaou*', the paper states: '*[l]e Centre est ainsi devenu le symbole fort de la reconnaissance de la culture kanake*'.⁴⁰⁷ The inclusion of the adverb '*ainsi*' in this sentence suggests a direct causal connection between the 'customary inauguration' and the CCT's posited significance as a strong symbol of the recognition of Kanak culture. Kanak agency is thus foregrounded and the potentially 'external' (non-Kanak) implication in this recognition of Kanak culture appears largely obscured.

The CCT and its inauguration are not inscribed by CLL in the political moment and dynamic of the Noumea Accord and its signing. Moreover, there is no suggestion that the CCT does or should be open in relation to and inclusive of the country's non-Kanak inhabitants. Indeed, this coverage concludes with the representation of the CCT as '*ce qui sera désormais le grand temple de la culture kanake*'.⁴⁰⁸

According to Brown, similar representations of the CCT as the '*temple de la culture*' were made during the Kaneka concerts held for the Centre's opening arts festival.⁴⁰⁹ Brown refers critically to this as 'self-congratulatory excess', and links it to the posited 'accompanying personality cultism for Jean-Marie Tjibaou himself, ex-priest turned social activist.'⁴¹⁰ Brown continues in this latter connection: '[t]his danger is given visible form in the "social-realist" statue of Tjibaou which, from its mound, overlooks

⁴⁰⁷ 'UN GRAND MOMENT DE COUTUME – L'inauguration du Centre Culturel Tjibaou', *Construire les Loyauté*, no. 58, May 1998, 31.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Brown (1998: 134).

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

the Centre bearing his name.’⁴¹¹ On Brown’s analysis, this cult surrounding the figure of Tjibaou is also inscribed in ‘a subtle shift in significance, as Tjibaou the politician calling for independence is replaced by the image of the promoter of his culture’, associated by Brown with a broader replacement of the political by the cultural in the CCT context.⁴¹²

While such a shift can be identified in certain aspects of the Centre (most notably its name) and in the associated discursive representations of Tjibaou, it is not necessarily as prevalent or simple as Brown’s analysis might initially suggest. The Tjibaou statue itself depicts Tjibaou with the FLNKS/Kanaky flag draped patriotically over one shoulder, and the permanent biographical exhibition on Tjibaou displayed in the Centre treats his pro-independence political engagement alongside and as interconnected to his engagement in the domain of Kanak cultural promotion,⁴¹³ as well as inscribing them both within a broader narrative context relating to New Caledonia’s colonial history.⁴¹⁴ Moreover, as discussed previously, particularly in the context of the political discourse elaborated by the Noumea Accord, while references to Kanak culture and identity may well represent a discursive strategy engaged by some to occlude, foreclose or neutralise the transformative political potential of the accommodation of Kanak pro-independence politics, for others, Kanak culture and identity directly signify Kanak politics (understandable in various ways), and their recognition and restitution are, in this discursive context, deeply politically significant.

On the other hand, it is difficult to argue with Brown’s identification of the CCT and many of the associated discourses (including those articulated during and in relation to

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Ibid. See also Message (2006a: 14), in which she talks rather of the political being ‘overlaid with the cultural, rather than positioned in opposition to it’ in the CCT project and its links to Tjibaou (in contrast to Brown’s identification of the ‘replacement’ of the political by the cultural). On the other hand, Message links the ‘anachronistic bronze statue’ of Tjibaou to ‘the risks associated with such overtly singular and non-compromising symbols of nationhood’, linked in turn to the politics of the CCT’s modern architecture and its potential links to French nationalism (discussed previously).

⁴¹³ For example, one heading runs: ‘[u]ne vision politique fondée sur la culture kanak.’

⁴¹⁴ In relation to this exhibition, see also Message (2006a: 16); Jolly (2001: 434).

the Centre's inauguration) as contributing to 'personality cultism' in relation to the figure of Tjibaou. This is also apparent in the local print-media coverage of the event, discussed above. Another example is the front page published by TDC in relation to the CCT's inauguration, which is filled with a photograph of the CCT taken from the hill behind the Tjibaou statue (from which angle the FLNKS/Kanaky flag is not visible), the back of the Tjibaou statue being prominent in the foreground and 'looking over' the Centre's buildings below. The accompanying headline states: '*[s]ous le regard de Jean-Marie – LE CENTRE TJIBAOU INAUGURÉ*'.⁴¹⁵ Tjibaou is also prominent in the narrative published in the lead passage of text appearing in bold at the beginning of this edition's coverage of the inauguration, which affirms:

*[v]oulue par Jean-Marie Tjibaou lors de la signature des accords de Matignon pour que la culture kanak soit enfin reconnue et puisse prendre la place qui lui revient en Nouvelle-Calédonie, le centre doit maintenant jouer son rôle de développement, de création et de diffusion de cette culture mais aussi devenir un lieu d'échange privilégié entre toutes les cultures de la région.*⁴¹⁶

Beyond this statement, there is little emphasis in the paper's treatment of the CCT and its inauguration on their political inscription in the Noumea Accord context or on the question of the Centre's openness in relation to and inclusion of the local non-Kanak population, although these themes are apparent in the extracts reproduced from the speeches made by Jospin, Lafleur, Wamytan and Marie-Claude Tjibaou.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁵ 'Sous le regard de Jean-Marie – LE CENTRE TJIBAOU INAUGURÉ', *Tour de Côte*, no. 84, June 1998, 1.

⁴¹⁶ 'En présence du premier Ministre – Le centre culturel Tjibaou inauguré', *Tour de Côte*, no. 84, June 1998, 6.

⁴¹⁷ 'Hommages à la mémoire de Jean-Marie Tjibaou et à une œuvre exceptionnelle', *Tour de Côte*, no. 84, June 1998, 8-9. These extracts are presented in a similar manner to those in LNC.

The increasing prominence in subsequent years of tensions surrounding the politics of Kanak culture and identity

As seen in this Chapter, the CCT project, realised during and initially inscribed in the political context and framework of the Matignon Accords, was largely Kanak focused and can in certain respects be characterised as a Kanak nationalist project. On the other hand, the significant involvement of the French State and certain prominent aspects of the project suggest its simultaneous inscription in a French nationalist agenda.

In 1998, the majority of local newspapers emphasised Piano's architecture and agency in relation to the CCT as a building project, as well as emphasising the presence and agency of Prime Minister Lionel Jospin in relation to the Centre's inauguration. This tended to align the CCT project's political implications and significance implicitly with French, rather than Kanak, nationalist orientations, and consequently with the perpetuation of French New Caledonia. In LNC's coverage, this was most directly expressed in an editorial published on the day of the CCT's inauguration in which the Centre and the signing of the Noumea Accord were both represented as symbols enshrining French Republican values and furthering the project of constructing a so-called '*France exemplaire*', through which France was projected to become an international leader and example. Moreover, LNC's coverage of the CCT's inauguration can be seen to have associated Kanak 'custom' predominantly with 'culture', and failed to identify or recognise it as a legitimate and effective mode of political action. The newspaper thus discursively neutralised the potential political significance and implications of the Kanak 'customary' inscription of the CCT project and its inauguration.

On the other hand, the discursive inscription of the CCT in a French nationalist agenda was both less explicit and less 'hegemonic' in LNC's broader contemporaneous coverage of the Centre's inauguration. This coverage not only included a range of voices and discourses from various sources articulated during or in relation to the event, but also tended to emphasise the political significance and symbolism of the inauguration in terms of the local implications of the Noumea Accord agreement. Indeed, the CCT was predominantly represented by LNC as an open and inclusive local symbol, project and institution, inscribed in and reflective of the socio-political dynamic and project of the Noumea Accord.

The tensions and issues surrounding the representational politics of the CCT as a predominantly and specifically Kanak, indigenous-centred institution and symbol in the context of New Caledonia's contemporary multi-ethnic society at the particular political juncture constituted by the signing of the Noumea Accord were largely left 'latent' in the contemporaneous coverage of the CCT's inauguration published by LNC. On the other hand, some indication of local sensitivity to these tensions and issues is apparent from the coverage published in other local papers, particularly including LNH and, to a lesser extent, LCB.

However, as discussed in Annex 8, criticisms of the CCT in this respect and in others would become increasingly prominent in the local public sphere in the period following the inauguration, and this trend is also identifiable in the treatment of the CCT in the local written press in subsequent years. A contrast can also be drawn between the coverage published by local newspapers such as LNC of the CCT's 1998 inauguration and their coverage of the eighth Festival of Pacific Arts, hosted by New Caledonia in 2000 (discussed in further detail in Annex 9). Key ADCK personnel were centrally involved in the *Comité organisateur du Festival des Arts du Pacifique* (Cofap), the body responsible for New Caledonia's organisation of this eighth edition of the Festival.⁴¹⁸ Important similarities can be seen to exist between the aims and missions of the CCT/ADCK, on the one hand, and the Festival of Pacific Arts and the Council of Pacific Arts (an emanation of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community which oversees the Festival, later renamed the Council of Pacific Arts and Culture), on the other.⁴¹⁹ In

⁴¹⁸ For example, Marie-Claude Tjibaou was both the President of the ADCK's *Conseil d'administration* and President of Cofap, and Octave Togna was both ADCK Director and Cofap Director. Note also that prominent *Palika* politician and author, Déwé Gorodey, was '*Chargée de la Culture*' on the ADCK's *Conseil d'administration* in her capacity as a '*personnalité invitée*', coordinator of the New Caledonian delegation to the eighth Festival of Pacific Arts and member of the New Caledonian Government responsible for the portfolio of '*la Culture, la Jeunesse et les Sports*'.

⁴¹⁹ According to the English version of the official web page of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the Festival of Pacific Arts was originally conceived to help 'combat the erosion of traditional customary practices' and as a means for 'the peoples of the region to share their cultures and establish deeper understanding and friendship between countries': Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Human Development Program, 'Background Information: A major international cultural event', November 2007, <http://www.spc.int/hdp/AC/hdp_festpac_update.html>. Two key roles of the ADCK are to valorise and preserve Kanak culture, identity and 'customary' traditions and heritage, and to '*promouvoir les échanges*

particular, both the CCT/ADCK and the Festival of Pacific Arts/Council of Pacific Arts have a predominantly indigenous focus and emphasis.

In the case of the Festival of Pacific Arts/Council of Pacific Arts, this emphasis has become increasingly prominent through the 1990s and 2000s.⁴²⁰ However, the organisation of such an indigenous-focused event in New Caledonia in 2000 brought to the fore a number of tensions relating to the politics of Kanak culture and identity in the local political context two years after the signing of the Noumea Accord and in the very early stages of its implementation. These tensions sparked local controversy and criticisms of the Festival's organisation, relating particularly to the apparently exclusively Kanak constitution of the delegation of Festival participants representing New Caledonia. These criticisms were directly treated in the local written press coverage of the event.

Both the criticisms and the defence of the Festival articulated in the local public domain were inscribed in the discourse and political framework of the Noumea Accord, appropriated and mobilised strategically in different and highly selective ways by different actors. The general salience of the Noumea Accord as a discursive frame of reference in public discourse at this time is clearly illustrated in the local press coverage of the Festival, confirming the trend already identifiable as emergent in 1998 through the local press coverage of the CCT's inauguration.

In contrast to the public discourse of the ADCK articulated in relation to the CCT at the time of its inauguration, comments made by members of Cofap (including notably Octave Togna) suggest that the (Kanak and generally pro-independence) organisers of the Festival in 2000 had intended for the event to be a vehicle for the representation and valorisation of New Caledonia's '*aspect multiculturel*' (while still preserving the

culturels, notamment dans la Région du Pacifique Sud', and the CCT similarly has a particular focus on and orientation towards the Pacific region, as seen above. CCT/ADCK, 'Présentation : L'Agence de développement de la culture kanak : Présentation', 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/lagence-de-developpement-de-la-culture-kanak/presentation>>.

⁴²⁰ See, for example, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (2003: 64-65).

privileged position and role of Kanak people, culture and identity as the country's indigenous people, culture and identity), and to involve the active participation of the country's non-Kanak communities alongside the Kanak people.⁴²¹ However, this purported intention was not ultimately realised in this cultural event in 2000.

A number of similar issues were raised and public controversy sparked by the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative three years later.

⁴²¹ See particularly Emmanuel Jeanjean, 'OCTAVE TOGNA, DIRECTEUR DU FESTIVAL – « Notre identité est devant nous... »', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 659, 02-08/11/2000, 18. This is discussed in Annex 9.

CHAPTER THREE

The *Mwâ Kâ* initiative and post-Noumea Accord representations in the local written press: deflection of the *Mwâ Kâ*'s radical politics through its discursive inscription in the identity politics of 'citizenship' and 'common destiny'

The *Mwâ Kâ* is a towering statue pole carved in 2003 by eleven Kanak artists. The original intention of those behind the *Mwâ Kâ* project was for the statue to be erected by 'the Kanak people' in the *Place des Cocotiers* in the very heart of the capital city to mark the 150th anniversary of French colonisation on the 24 September 2003.¹ This project was an initiative of the *Comité 150 ans après*, which was constituted in June 2003 under the aegis of the *Sénat coutumier* and the *Conseil National des Droits du Peuple Autochtone* (CNDPA).² However, the *Mwâ Kâ* sparked considerable controversy, and the RPRC Mayor of Noumea refused permission for its erection in the *Place des Cocotiers*. The statue was only later erected in its own public square in a different part of the city. Since 2004, this public square has served as the location for an annual event (organised until 2005 by the *Comité 150 ans après* and subsequently along with or by the New Caledonian Government) to mark the 24 September anniversary, an event which has remained controversial and has met with variable popular success over the years.

¹ Note that a number of other commemorative events marking this 24 September 2003 anniversary were held throughout the archipelago. These events were organised or patronised by various local anti-independence politicians (Jean Lèques, Harold Martin and Philippe Gomès) and a Kanak-focused event was also organised in Pouébo. These other events are discussed in Annex 10.

² 'Un « Comité du 150^e » pour commémorer le 24 septembre', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/06/2003, 13; Raphaël Mapou (2003: 88). Annex 11 situates the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in its socio-political and historical context, particularly in terms of the origins of the project and the creation and orientation towards indigenous rights and representation of the bodies behind it, including the *Comité 150 ans après*, the *Sénat coutumier* and the CNDPA.

Its high point in 2005 was marked by the declaration of the 24 September as New Caledonian 'Citizenship Day' by the New Caledonian Government and a ceremony organised by the *Comité 150 ans après* centred on the 'customary' Kanak *accueil* of New Caledonia's settler and immigrant communities. Thus, in contrast to both the 1975 *Mélanésie 2000* festival (which only foreshadowed such a transformative collective socio-political *accueil* process in its *jeu scénique*) and the 1998 inauguration of the CCT (which did not incorporate representatives of the country's established non-Kanak communities into its legitimating Kanak '*démarche coutumière*'), the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative can be seen to have directly aimed at (re)instituting Kanak sovereignty and (re)founding the country's present and future socio-political constitution and order on the basis of indigenous sovereignty, legitimacy, 'custom' and the Kanak people's posited special rights.

In the public discourse articulated by the *Comité 150 ans après* through the local written press, this project was inscribed in the dynamic of the Noumea Accord. The *Mwâ Kâ* initiative from 2003 was thus constructed as being designed to symbolise and realise the process of collective, grass-roots reconciliation between the country's Kanak and non-Kanak communities posited as necessary for the successful construction of the 'common destiny' (associated with the category of local 'citizenship') projected in the Noumea Accord.

On the other hand, the predominant symbolism attributed by the *Comité 150 ans après* to the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and initiative from September 2003 was the metaphor of the construction of a 'traditional' Kanak '*grande case*'. As this might suggest, while the politics of Kanak culture and identity engaged through the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative was explicitly articulated by its organisers as firmly inscribed in the inclusive political project of the Noumea Accord, the nature of this socio-political project and the very foundation of its legitimacy can be seen to have been reformulated on 'Kanak terms' through the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative.

The initiative thus placed the Kanak people, Kanak identity and Kanak legitimacy at the (symbolic and material) centre of the Noumea Accord's projected 'common destiny' and the category of local 'citizenship' in two (interrelated) key respects, which together can be seen to partially transform the Accord's socio-political project. Firstly, in the discourse of the *Comité 150 ans après* and through the physical form of the statue itself,

the *Mwâ Kâ* represents a strong symbol of the historically founded political legitimacy of the Kanak people. Consequently, while the *Mwâ Kâ* is also discursively constructed as symbolising local ‘citizenship’, this affirmation of local ‘citizenship’ is necessarily conditioned by the recognition of the Kanak people as indigenous.

Secondly, the Kanak people and their ‘customary’ representatives are accorded a special, pre-eminent role, agency and legitimacy, differentiated from that accorded to the country’s non-Kanak inhabitants. This is achieved through the symbolism and the historical narratives represented in the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and its carvings, as well as through the nature and structure of the public events organised by the *Comité 150 ans après* around the *Mwâ Kâ* to mark the 24 September anniversary from 2003. The *Mwâ Kâ* initiative can thus be seen to reformulate and potentially extend the Noumea Accord’s socio-political project through refounding it on the basis of ‘Kanak identity’, constructed in terms of the posited primacy of Kanak political legitimacy, which is itself constructed as being capable of contemporary political representation by particular Kanak ‘customary’ structures and authorities, including the *Sénat coutumier* and the eight regional *Conseils coutumiers*.

At various times since 2003 the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative and the associated politics of Kanak culture and identity have been discursively reconfigured and mobilised by different local politicians for various, often highly divergent political ends. This is particularly significant for the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative by reason of the fact that, unlike the *Mélanésie 2000* festival and the CCT’s construction and inauguration, the primary interlocutors of its organisers were not the Metropolitan but the local (Municipal, Provincial and New Caledonian) political and administrative institutions. Moreover, these local institutions in the form of the New Caledonian Government would ultimately become the primary organisers of the annual events held at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* on the 24 September. Nevertheless, tensions have persisted in the local political sphere in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative and the related annual events, particularly given their association with certain controversial aspects of the Noumea Accord, such as the category of local ‘citizenship’ and the ‘*signes identitaires du pays*’.

This Chapter focuses primarily on the representations in the local written press of the *Mwâ Kâ*, and the associated politics of Kanak culture and identity, between September 2003 and September 2005. As discussed in the Introduction, certain changes were

taking place in the domain of the local written press at this time, which were interlinked to the significant political developments during this period. Lafleur's RPCR had dominated key local political institutions since the party was founded in the late 1970s. At the 2004 elections, the newly rebaptised *Rassemblement-UMP* (or RUMP) was reduced to a minority party in both the New Caledonian Congress and the Assembly of the Southern Province. This significant political upheaval prompted Lafleur to resign as President of the Southern Province and withdraw from the New Caledonian Congress, although he retained his seat as a deputy in the French National Assembly. This upheaval also led, in July 2005, to Lafleur's replacement by Pierre Frogier as the *Rassemblement-UMP*'s President. The 2004 elections signalled the rise of the *Rassemblement-UMP*'s chief political rival at that time, the newly created and seemingly more moderate 'loyalist' party, *Avenir ensemble*, which grouped political figures such as Marie-Noëlle Thémereau, Harold Martin, Didier Leroux and Philippe Gomès. The changes in the domain of the local print media linked to these political developments (discussed in the Introduction) are readily apparent in the coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative published during this period by *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, *Les Infos* and *Le Chien bleu*, analysed below.

The *Mwâ Kâ* initiative on the 24 September 2003

In an interview published by LI just prior to the 24 September anniversary in 2003, Georges Mandaoué, Secretary-General of the *Comité 150 ans après*,³ outlines the key objectives of the commemoration being organised by the *Comité*.⁴ Mandaoué characterises the commemoration as having both a specifically Kanak focus, particularly as a means for the Kanak people to take stock of their present situation in light of their past, as well as a broader significance uniting all local 'citizens' in line

³ *Comité 150 ans après* (2003: 7).

⁴ Thierry Squillario, 'Georges Mandaoué : « Le 24 septembre, c'est le début d'un nouveau soleil »', *Les Infos*, no. 52, 19/09/2003, 2.

with the ‘forward-looking’ socio-political process he identifies as being engaged in the Noumea Accord.⁵

However, the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and initiative overall appear to have focused far less on taking stock of past and present realities than on projecting a particular vision of the country’s future and ‘common destiny’.⁶ This predominant orientation towards the future is itself foregrounded in the headline of this mid-September interview with Mandaoué – ‘*Georges Mandaoué : « Le 24 septembre, c’est le début d’un nouveau soleil »*’⁷ – and had also been foreshadowed in the headline of an interview with Mandaoué and Raphaël Mapou in their capacity as members of the *Comité 150 ans après* published by LI in July – ‘*1853-2003 : une commémoration tournée vers l’avenir*’.⁸ In an interview published by LI just after the 24 September 2003, Mandaoué also particularly emphasised the ‘forward-looking’ nature of the *Comité*’s initiatives, orientations and objectives.⁹

⁵ Ibid. Thus, Mandaoué affirms that: ‘[p]our le peuple Kanak, d’abord, c’est très important de se restituer dans le temps par rapport à son histoire. En faisant un état des lieux très objectif de la situation. [...] Et puis le 24 septembre pour nous, c’est le début d’un nouveau soleil, une ouverture vers l’avenir. C’est pour cela que cette date doit marquer pour nous un moment où on attache la parole et dans le temps, on va toujours cultiver cette parole. Cela veut dire que des gens ont signé des accords, il y a cinq ans, et nous, en tant que citoyens de ce pays, on va partager le 24 septembre ensemble. Avec tout le monde, comme le stipule l’Accord de Nouméa.’

⁶ This can be contrasted to the ‘colloque’ organised by the *Comité 150 ans après* and the CNDPA in August 2003 (discussed in Annex 11) and the book outlining a chronology of the country’s colonial history produced by the *Comité* and sold on the 24 September 2003 as part of the event organised in Noumea around the *Mwâ Kâ* statue: *Comité 150 ans après* (2003).

⁷ Thierry Squillario, ‘Georges Mandaoué : « Le 24 septembre, c’est le début d’un nouveau soleil »’, *Les Infos*, no. 52, 19/09/2003, 2.

⁸ ‘« L’invité du jeudi », en partenariat avec Radio Djido – 1853-2003 : une commémoration tournée vers l’avenir’, *Les Infos*, no. 41, 04/07/2003, 4.

⁹ ‘« L’invité du jeudi », en partenariat avec Radio Djido – Georges Mandaoué : « Il serait bon que des initiatives citoyennes se concrétisent » ; Jerry Delathière : « Le courage, c’est d’assumer l’Accord de Nouméa »’, *Les Infos*, no. 53, 26/09/2003, 4. For example, Mandaoué states, on behalf of the *Comité*, that: ‘[p]our nous, les objectifs du 24 septembre, c’est que tout le monde soit ensemble ce jour-là. Cette journée, c’est celle de l’avenir, donc des enfants. Il est important que tout le monde y soit, qu’on puisse le partager ensemble. A travers tout ce qu’on fait, c’est l’esprit de l’Accord de Nouméa qui nous guide. On veut faire en sorte que les gens de ce pays se rencontrent, se disent des choses dans la joie et dans la gaieté. Mais il ne fait [sic] pas s’arrêter à cette journée-là, cet esprit doit se poursuivre.’

The 'forward-looking' orientation of the *Comité 150 ans après*'s *Mwâ Kâ* initiative is also apparent in an interview published by LNC on the 23 September 2003 with Lucienne Moréo-cee, who is similarly identified as a representative of the *Comité*.¹⁰ On the other hand, Moréo-cee also expressly highlights the country's 150 years of colonial history as significant in informing the *Mwâ Kâ*'s symbolism and objectives.¹¹ The focus on history and the past identified by Moréo-cee in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* is not, however, articulated in terms of an evaluation of that history and its significance for the present and the future, but rather in terms of the need to 'integrate' the country's colonial past by means of its '*enterrement*', which is itself represented by implication as the necessary precondition for the construction of a harmonious 'common destiny', inclusive of all of the country's inhabitants.

Thus, Moréo-cee explains in this interview that, having decided to place the 2003 celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the '*prise de possession*' '*sous le signe de l'Accord de Nouméa*',¹² the *Comité 150 ans après*:

*s'est demandé comment intégrer ces 150 ans d'histoire dans la dynamique de l'Accord. Les politiques ont signé un document en mai 1998, mais nous, la société civile, comment on signe ? Comment on enterre ce passé parfois douloureux ? Et on a finalement choisi la symbolique du poteau : le mwâ kâ.*¹³

Moréo-cee then goes on to link the symbolism of the erection of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue to the construction of '*la grande case du pays*' of the future.¹⁴ Indeed, Moréo-cee ultimately characterises the so-called '*idée générreuse*' behind the *Comité*'s *Mwâ Kâ* initiative as being: '*réunir tout le monde pour aller de l'avant*'.¹⁵

¹⁰ Xavier Serre, 'Lucienne Moréo-cee, comité 150 ans après : « Un poteau pour enterrer les différences »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 2. This is the first article published in any of the local print-media publications to refer expressly to the *Mwâ Kâ* statue itself.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Furthermore, as indicated by Moréo-cee, the symbolism of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue was to be supplemented by an accompanying sculptural element in the form of a block of garnierite (nickel ore – itself symbolic of the country's wealth, contained within the land itself) to be positioned near the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and engraved with a key passage from the Noumea Accord's Preamble:

*[L]e passé a été le temps de la colonisation. Le présent est le temps du partage, par le rééquilibrage. L'avenir doit être le temps de l'identité, dans un destin commun.*¹⁶

Moréo-cee's comments in this interview clearly indicate the expressed emphasis placed by the *Comité 150 ans après* on the inscription of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in the dynamic (and the discourse) of the Noumea Accord. However, Moréo-cee also represents this initiative as being designed to go beyond the letter to the spirit of the Accord, in directly engaging 'civil society', at a grass-roots level, in the Noumea Accord process. Thus, the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative is constructed by Moréo-cee as furthering the socio-cultural process of forging a 'common destiny', represented as the necessary complement to the more directly political and legal process of the Noumea Accord. The primary target of this initiative, 'civil society', is defined by Moréo-cee as an inclusive category, comprising Kanak and non-Kanak alike.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*, 'Préambule', point 4. Thus, according to Moréo-cee in this interview, the *Mwâ Kâ*'s intended symbolic affirmation of a commitment to forging a 'common destiny', in line with the dynamic and project of the Noumea Accord, would be a message which '*sera gravé dans la pierre*'. Xavier Serre, 'Lucienne Moréo-cee, comité 150 ans après : « Un poteau pour enterrer les différences »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 2. The figurative sense of this phrase adds to its literal meaning, given the connection between the enduring physical qualities of stone and this material's connection with the continuity and authority of monuments as vectors of social meaning.

¹⁷ Xavier Serre, 'Lucienne Moréo-cee, comité 150 ans après : « Un poteau pour enterrer les différences »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 2. The question of the inclusive nature and success (or otherwise) of the different participative public events organised around the *Mwâ Kâ* on the 24 September from 2003 (events which were vital to the construction of the statue and initiative's symbolism, meaning, significance and legitimacy, and thus of the associated politics of Kanak culture and identity) was a prominent subject treated in the print-media coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* and these events. It is discussed further below.

The *Mwâ Kâ* project has never been publicly represented by the members of the *Comité 150 ans après* as a specifically pro-independence political initiative. Rather, it has consistently been presented by them as an initiative designed to reinforce the Noumea Accord and its project of forging a ‘common destiny’, at the same time as being constructed as a symbol of Kanak unity and identity, affirming the particular legitimacy of the Kanak people as the country’s indigenous people. Indeed, the *Comité* itself tends overall to have been represented by its members (as they are cited in the local written press) as an association representing various elements of (Kanak) ‘civil society’ (including notably Kanak ‘customary’ representatives), as distinct from local politicians and political formations.

In mid-September 2003 Mandaoué rejected the suggestion by LI that the commemorations being organised by the *Comité* to mark the 24 September anniversary ‘*sert [...] de cheval de Troie à certains qui ont des visées plutôt politiques*’, given the upcoming provincial elections.¹⁸ On the other hand, Mandaoué confirmed the significant role of ‘*les coutumiers*’ in defining the nature of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative and its objectives in this interview.¹⁹ This engagement of Kanak ‘customary’ figures and representatives in the initiative can itself be identified as political in nature, as seen further below.

In organising this event purportedly designed to be inclusive of all of the country’s ethno-cultural inhabitants in 2003 ‘*sous le signe de l’Accord de Nouméa*’²⁰ to mark the 150th anniversary French colonisation, the *Comité 150 ans après* also represented itself as attempting to transform the symbolic significance of the 24 September anniversary

¹⁸ Thierry Squillario, ‘Georges Mandaoué : « Le 24 septembre, c’est le début d’un nouveau soleil »’, *Les Infos*, no. 52, 19/09/2003, 2.

¹⁹ Thierry Squillario, ‘Georges Mandaoué : « Le 24 septembre, c’est le début d’un nouveau soleil »’, *Les Infos*, no. 52, 19/09/2003, 2. The importance of the role played by ‘*les coutumiers*’ in the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative was also underlined by Elie Poigoune in 2007, who is quoted by *Palabre coutumier* as stating in relation to the initiative that: ‘*[i]l n’y a pas eu l’unanimité autour de ça, au niveau politique. Ce sont surtout les coutumiers qui l’ont fait.*’ ‘Que représente le Mwakâa pour la population ?’ (2007).

²⁰ Xavier Serre, ‘Lucienne Moréo-cee, comité 150 ans après : « Un poteau pour enterrer les différences »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 2.

through its reorientation away from competing constructions of the past (which are strategically mobilised to justify equally divergent and competing visions for the future – namely independence or maintenance within the French Republic) and towards a projected harmonious future and ‘common destiny’.²¹ In keeping with the terms of the Noumea Accord itself, no explicit reference is made by the *Comité* in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* as to the future political status of the country, despite the initiative’s clear ‘country-’ or ‘nation-building’ overtones. However, through various other discursive and symbolic operations, the *Comité*’s initiative and the *Mwâ Kâ* statue can be seen to construct the past, the present and the future, and the continuities and discontinuities between these categories, in certain ways which have their own strategic political orientations and implications. In particular, the *Mwâ Kâ* can be seen to construct a certain vision of Kanak identity and unity, and the legitimate position of the Kanak people and certain ‘customary’ authorities stemming from Kanak indigeneity, running continuously from the past to the present and into the future.

Ambivalent symbolism: the *Mwâ Kâ* statue as *poteau central* and *grande case*

Despite the *Comité*’s emphasis on the Noumea Accord and the avowed inclusion of New Caledonia’s non-Kanak inhabitants in the 24 September 2003 *Mwâ Kâ* event, the *Mwâ Kâ* statue itself can in numerous respects be seen to represent a strong symbol of specifically Kanak identity, legitimacy and rights in a *revendicatif* mode. This is perhaps particularly apparent on consideration of the dominant symbolism of the statue pole’s name and overall form.

²¹ See Mandaoué in ‘« L’invité du jeudi », en partenariat avec Radio Djido – Georges Mandaoué : « Il serait bon que des initiatives citoyennes se concrétisent » ; Jerry Delathière : « Le courage, c’est d’assumer l’Accord de Nouméa »’, *Les Infos*, no. 53, 26/09/2003, 4.

As seen above, Lucienne Moréo-cee identified the term ‘*Mwâ Kâ*’²² as signifying the ‘*poteau*’ (or ‘*poteau central*’) around which a traditional Kanak *grande case* is constructed²³ – indeed, Moréo-cee further represented the *Mwâ Kâ*’s sculpted form as having been designed to constitute the *poteau central* of a metaphorical *grande case* representing the country of the future, itself embodying the ‘*destin commun*’ to be built and shared by all of New Caledonia’s inhabitants as formulated in the Noumea Accord.²⁴ Mobilising the symbolism of the *poteau central* and the *grande case*, sourced in Kanak culture and ‘tradition’, to represent New Caledonia’s future as a unified country and society in the *Mwâ Kâ* statue implicitly but quite unambiguously places that culture and ‘tradition’, and so Kanak people and perspectives, at the heart of this socio-political project and its very nature and legitimacy.

Moreover, given the strong links that exist in the contemporary context between the symbol of the Kanak *grande case*, the affirmation of Kanak identity, culture and unity, and Kanak *revendications* of land and political sovereignty and independence,²⁵ the *Mwâ Kâ* statue might itself be interpreted in this same register of Kanak *revendication* as going beyond the ‘consensual’ and ‘inclusive’ framework of the Noumea Accord. At first glance, the *Mwâ Kâ* statue (particularly given its chosen place of installation in the heart of the capital city)²⁶ might thus be interpreted as representing a Kanak nationalist monument. In this perspective, the *Mwâ Kâ*’s symbolic mobilisation of the *poteau*

²² Note that, while I have chosen to use the orthography ‘*Mwâ Kâ*’ when referring to this statue (and to the public monument and square into which it was subsequently incorporated), as with many words transcribed from Kanak languages, a number of different orthographic variations of this term exist and appear in different published materials. This is apparent, for example, from the orthography of this term as it has been used to designate the CCT’s ‘*aire coutumière*’ – ‘*Mwakaa*’ – discussed in Chapter Two.

²³ This was also confirmed by LNC, which stated in another article that ‘*Mwâ Kâ*’ means ‘*poteau en langue Djubéa*’: Ingrid Chanene, ‘Cérémonie aujourd’hui baie de la Moselle’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/09/2003, 6.

²⁴ Xavier Serre, ‘Lucienne Moréo-cee, comité 150 ans après : «Un poteau pour enterrer les différences»’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 2. In a similar vein, Adèle Buama is cited in a 2007 article published by *Palabre coutumier* in her capacity as the then ‘*Secrétaire et porte-parole*’ of the *Comité 150 ans après* as explaining the meaning of the statue’s name as follows: ‘*Mwâkâa, la maison (mwa) de l’homme du pays (kâa)*’. Lurton (2007: 84).

²⁵ As discussed in Chapters One and Two, and Annexes 1 and 4.

²⁶ See the discussion below.

central and the *grande case* would be analogous to the symbolic mobilisation of the *flèche faïtière* in the design of the Kanak nationalist flag created by the FLNKS in 1984.²⁷ Bensa highlights that, by using the *flèche faïtière* as the central symbol in their flag, '[p]ar métaphore, ils [Kanak nationalists] assimilent leur futur pays indépendant à une « grande case » que chaque habitant de l'archipel devrait contribuer à édifier.'²⁸ This clearly resonates with the discursive construction by members of the *Comité 150 ans après* of the *Mwâ Kâ*'s symbolism.

However, the FLNKS/Kanaky flag as a so-called '*signe identitaire*' is still overwhelmingly identified exclusively with Kanak identity and with the political movement and struggle for Kanak independence.²⁹ In contrast, the *Mwâ Kâ* has been constructed in the discourse of members of the *Comité 150 ans après* as both a symbol of Kanak identity (without reference to political independence) and a symbol of the country's future 'common destiny' and shared 'citizenship', in the mode of a Noumea Accord-style '*signe identitaire*', designed to unite Kanak and non-Kanak behind a common socio-political project that is not explicitly defined as a project for (Kanak)

²⁷ See the discussion in Chapter One.

²⁸ Bensa (1990b: 17). In 2000, Bensa also highlighted that the: '*cristallisation dans l'image de la case du sentiment identitaire affleure [...] dans les métaphores politiques : « construire ensemble la case », « faire une place à chacun dans la case », etc., nombre d'expressions de ce type reviennent dans la bouche des hommes politiques kanak qui assimilent ainsi la vieille demeure d'autrefois au peuple et au pays dont ils ont la charge.*' Bensa (2000: 76).

²⁹ On the other hand, certain pro-independence figures affirm that the symbolism contained in the FLNKS/Kanaky flag is 'universal'. For example, Margueritte Declercq (the widow of Pierre Declercq) is quoted by LNC as having '*rappeler la symbolique des couleurs du drapeau du FLNKS*' in her speech delivered on the occasion of the inauguration of the '*Place des Accords*' in Mont-Dore (which coincided with the first official simultaneous raising of the French and the FLNKS/Kanaky flag in that *commune*) in August 2010 as follows: '*« Le vert : la terre des ancêtres, la richesse du sol, l'espoir et le pays ; le rouge : le sang versé dans la lutte, le socialisme et l'unité du peuple ; le bleu : le ciel et le Pacifique, la souveraineté dans le Pacifique du pays kanak ; le disque d'or : le soleil sur lequel s'inscrit en noir la case avec la flèche faïtière et sa toutoute. [...] Vous remarquerez que ses symboles sont universels et peuvent donc être reconnus par l'ensemble de la population »*'. Christophe Castieau (with Florence Loré), '*Ils font fronton commun*', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/08/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>. The FLNKS/Kanaky flag and the question of the designation of the country's '*signes identitaires*' pursuant to the terms of the Noumea Accord are discussed in Annex 15.

independence, despite the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative's 'country-' or 'nation-building' overtones (which are also identifiable in the Noumea Accord itself).³⁰

Nevertheless, a *revendicatif* aspect to the *Mwâ Kâ* statue pole as a symbol of Kanak unity, specificity, historical precedence and legitimacy can still be identified, albeit in a slightly different register.

Political implications of the statue's form

The *poteaux centraux* of *grandes cases* were 'traditionally' generally left unsculpted and uncarved.³¹ However, two recent examples of *grandes cases* constructed in Noumea with carved *poteaux centraux* were built in the late 1990s under the supervision of Narcisse Decoiré,³² who also supervised the creation and sculpting of the *Mwâ Kâ* in 2003.

³⁰ Constructions of the *Mwâ Kâ* as a Noumea Accord-style *signe identitaire* are also discussed further below.

³¹ Writing in 1990, Boulay identified only two known historical examples of sculpted *poteaux centraux*. Boulay (1990a: 105, 110); Boulay (1990b: 116). Kasarhérou and Klein also note the rarity of sculpted *poteaux centraux*: Kasarhérou and Klein (2000a: 28).

³² Leaila Adjoui, 'Bretea, ou le succès d'une entreprise de tribu', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 02/05/2009, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>. These *cases* were constructed by Decoiré's small-scale construction company, *Bretea* (identified as a word in the Djubéa language meaning 'lever la tête'), founded in Saint-Louis in 1989 and specialising in traditional-style buildings and *cases*. The first of these examples is the *poteau central* of the *grande case* that was constructed on the Nouville premises of the *Conseil consultatif coutumier du territoire* in 1996/97. See Del Rio (1997a); 'La case du Conseil coutumier' (1997); 'Le Grand palabre' (1998). However, this *grande case* was destroyed by arsonists on the 13 August 1999, 11 days before the official inauguration of the *Sénat coutumier*: *Comité 150 ans après* (2003: 90). The second example is the *poteau central* of the *grande case* constructed to represent the 'pays du sud' in the *Mwakaa*, or 'aire coutumière', of the CCT. See Kasarhérou and Klein (2000a: 29). The carvings in this second example compose a particular historical narrative – the CCT/ADCK guidebook cites Decoiré directly, who describes the 'histoire' ('story'/'history') depicted in these carvings as follows: '[I]es Blancs sont venus par la mer. Ils ont vu les pirogues, les filets à poisson. Ils ont vu un monde qui existait déjà avec les échanges (symbolisés par la natte et les tas d'ignames), les clans guerriers, la maison, la lune et le soleil. Tout était déjà là avant la venue des Blancs': Kasarhérou and Klein (2000a: 29). This description and carved account of the colonial encounter clearly emphasises the anteriority of Kanak people and society to colonisation, thereby implicitly asserting the primacy of Kanak claims and legitimacy as the original, indigenous inhabitants of the country. This resonates with aspects of the historical narrative of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue's carvings as they have been discursively represented by the *Comité 150 ans après*, discussed below.

The *Mwâ Kâ* statue is twelve meters long in total, although only ten metres remain visible once it has been erected vertically and its base installed in the ground. The crest of the statue is carved as a Kanak *grande case*, which is crowned by a *flèche faîtière* on which has been threaded a conch shell. Underneath this *case*, the statue-pole's main carved section is divided into eight metre-long parts, each designed to represent one of the eight Kanak *aires coutumières*. The names of the *aires coutumières* corresponding to these middle sections of the statue have been carved into eight wooden labels or signs in the form of mini-*flèches faîtières*. These *flèches* are designed to punctuate the left and right sides of the post, alternating from one side to the other and implanted into its flanks at 45 degree angles.³³

Some of the different parts of the sculpture have been stained or painted. The main sections of the sculpture have all been carved so as to face the same way, the statute having a discernable front and back.³⁴ The back of the *Mwâ Kâ* has been carved to a considerably lesser degree (in terms of the depth of the carvings, the surface area covered by them and their sculptural refinement) when compared to the front. The main feature of the back of the statue is a vine, which encircles the entire pole, wrapping from front to back in a spiral. Numerous small and isolated bas-relief carvings are interspersed in the 'empty' space remaining on the back of the statue.³⁵ The carvings on the left and right sides of the *poteau* are predominantly composed of geometric patterns and motifs, often recalling local petroglyph designs.

³³ In 2006 and 2007, vandals progressively stole each of these *flèches*, which were all subsequently recovered and were replaced on the *Mwâ Kâ* statue in 2010. 'Les calvaires du Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/02/2007, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>; 'Voleur de flèches', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 01/09/2007, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

³⁴ This could possibly be linked to the fact that, as noted by Boulay, '*l'arrière des grandes cases est sacré et interdit : le visiteur doit arriver par le bas de l'allée cérémonielle aboutissant à la porte de la construction.*' Boulay also links this to the tradition of sculpting *flèches faîtières* exclusively to be viewed from their front. Boulay (1990a: 114).

³⁵ These small carvings, which have only minimal prominence, include representations of: several birds (including at least one *cagou*); a *grande case*; a bundle of 'traditional' Kanak 'money'; what appears to be the Rolling Stones lips and tongue logo (although note that tongues protruding from open mouths are a feature of some 'traditional' Kanak sculptural motifs); a raining cloud; the initials of the two sculptors responsible for the *Paicî-Cèmuhi* section; a turtle; a coconut tree; a very small profile of the head and shoulders of the Kanak *chef* Ataï (an iconic Kanak historical figure representing Kanak resistance to colonial domination); and an aerial map of the New Caledonian archipelago.

The base of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue buried in the ground has been identified by members of the *Comité 150 ans après* as representing (and, indeed, as being ‘entrusted’ to) the ‘*esprits de nos ancêtres*’,³⁶ or ‘*les Vieux*’,³⁷ and can thus be seen to symbolise the posited deep-rooted historical continuity and legitimacy of Kanak ‘custom’ and the shared cultural heritage of the Kanak people. The middle part of the statue symbolises the unity of the Kanak people through the unification of the eight sections representing the official contemporary *aires coutumières*. According to LNC’s report, the statue’s carvings in this section also ‘intermix’: ‘*mythes fondateurs kanaks et références historiques à la colonisation*.’³⁸

Consequently, these eight sections have been identified as collectively representing 150 years of the country’s colonial history.³⁹ In this respect, the *Mwâ Kâ* statue can, like *Mélanésie 2000*’s *jeu scénique*, be seen to represent the unity of the Kanak people as being linked to a shared history and experience of colonisation.⁴⁰ However, the carvings

³⁶ This phrase was used by Adèle Buama and quoted in Lurton (2007: 86).

³⁷ One article published by LNC on the *Mwâ Kâ* in 2003, which draws heavily on the discourse of Narcisse Decoiré, identifies the bottom two metres of the statue as being buried in the ground ‘[c]ar tout commence par la terre et finit dans la terre’, and as representing ‘*la part des Vieux, celle qui appartient à ceux qui ne sont plus, et qui nous appartiendra aussi à nous, un jour.*’ Henri Lepot, ‘Un symbole à déchiffrer de bas en haut’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10.

³⁸ Ibid. This characterisation is discussed further below.

³⁹ Henri Lepot, ‘Un symbole à déchiffrer de bas en haut’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10.

⁴⁰ On the other hand, by reason of the particular, regionally specific nature of the carvings in these eight sections the Kanak people as the unified subject and agent of its own history is not as readily identifiable in the symbolism of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue’s carvings as it was in *Mélanésie 2000*’s *jeu scénique*, where it was represented by the figure of *Kanaké*. However, the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative was itself constructed by the *Comité 150 ans après* as a means of affirming the unity of the Kanak people and constituting that people as a key agent in the construction of the country’s future. In this regard, the popular events directly implicating ‘the Kanak people’ (and their official ‘customary’ representatives) as participants organised by the *Comité* (itself a Kanak organisation incorporating a number of these ‘customary’ representatives) around the 24 September from 2003 onwards are particularly significant. It is also important to note that the mobilisation of a figure such as *Kanaké* to represent the Kanak people and their indigeneity (as in the *jeu scénique* or, indeed, in the CCT’s *chemin kanak*) in the case of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue/initiative could have been problematic, given its emphasis on the significance of all eight Kanak *aires coutumières* and the fact that *Kanaké* has been appropriated from a particular set of foundational myths originating in a particular *aire coutumière*. In contrast to the *Mwâ Kâ* statue/initiative, the Kanak people (as the subject and agent of its own history) is referred to metaphorically as ‘*Tea Kanaké*’ on several occasions in the introduction written by Roch Wamytan to the book produced by the *Comité 150 ans après* and sold on the 24 September 2003: see Wamytan (2003). This introduction and the chronology presented in this book are also relatively explicitly inscribed in the political discourse of the Kanak independence movement, an

in each of these eight sections of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue do not include any clear and explicit references to or representations of the negative impacts of colonisation on the Kanak people. The traumatism and injustices of colonisation are consequently only conveyed implicitly through the context of and intention behind the *Mwâ Kâ* statue's creation and erection, and the associated invocation of the Noumea Accord's Preamble (which expressly deals with these topics). Indeed, only one of the eight middle sections – that representing the '*pays Hoot Ma Whaa Hap*' – can be seen to include any explicit references to colonisation in its carvings, through the incorporation of a European sailing ship.⁴¹

LNC's coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* in September 2003 includes a graphic in which textual descriptions and explanations of the eight middle carved sections of the statue appear alongside the relevant parts of a photograph of the statue.⁴² Only three of these textual descriptions construct the symbolism of the relevant *aire coutumière*'s carvings in relation to other *aires* and the country as a whole. In two of these three cases, this link relates directly to the history of colonisation. These two textual descriptions are the only to refer directly to colonisation.⁴³

inscription which is similarly predominantly absent from the *Comité*'s representations of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue/initiative in the public domain.

⁴¹ Moreover, this is the only part of the statue's carvings which can be clearly situated temporally. Despite the references drawn from Kanak culture and 'tradition' (including references to particular foundational myths) in various other sections, the statue's representation of Kanak culture, 'custom' and 'history' otherwise appears to be a-temporal (or, indeed, 'omni-temporal'). Consequently, the Kanak identity or identities represented and symbolised in the carvings of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue appear to be static and unchanging through time.

⁴² 'Mwâ kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10. This exact graphic and accompanying text were also reproduced by LNC in September 2005 in its coverage of the inauguration of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*: 'Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 3. In 2007, exactly the same textual descriptions explaining each of these eight sections of the statue were also published by *Palabre coutumier*: 'Signification du MwâKâa' (2007). While no author is identified by LNC in relation to these textual descriptions, authorship is attributed by *Palabre coutumier* to Adèle Kuia Buama, identified as the '*Secrétaire et porte-parole du Comité 150 ans après*' in 2007. Given the continuities between these textual descriptions and the discourse articulated by various members of the *Comité 150 ans après* reproduced in these and other publications, these textual descriptions appear to have been directly supplied by or drawn closely from the discourse of the *Comité*.

⁴³ 'Mwâ kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10; 'Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 3; 'Signification du MwâKâa' (2007: 89). The first of these two descriptions is that relating to the carving for the '*pays Hoot Ma Whaap*' (in the North of the *Grande Terre*), at the statue's base. This

The Kanak case sculpted at the crest of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue was identified in 2003 by LNC (again drawing on the discourse of the *Comité 150 ans après*) as representing: ‘*la part des vivants, celle du futur : la case, là où tout le monde doit se retrouver.*’⁴⁴ In 2007 Adèle Buama (another member of the *Comité*) represented the case at the top of the statue as the ‘*symbole de l’Accord de Nouméa signé en 1998*’.⁴⁵

The textual descriptions published by LNC refer to the names of some, but not all, of the sculptors who carved the different parts of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue representing the eight *aires coutumières*.⁴⁶ In an interview published alongside this graphic in 2003, Decoiré maintains that these sculptors ‘*sont venus des huit aires coutumières*’.⁴⁷ LNC’s coverage similarly affirms on several occasions that the ‘*artistes de chacune des huit aires coutumières ont sculpté leur part du pays*’,⁴⁸ and that the statue was carved by

description runs: ‘[L]e pays Hoot Ma Whaa Hap vient en premier, à la base, parce que c’est lui qui a accueilli la colonisation. C’est par là qu’elle est entrée dans la case kanak. C’est pourquoi ce premier étage de la sculpture montre la mer, un bateau, les chambranles d’une case ouverte sur la profondeur du bois, et le Vieux qui, le premier, a vu au loin arriver les bateaux européens.’ This description constructs the arrival of the coloniser in the ‘customary’ framework of *accueil*. However, in this case, the Kanak agent performing this *accueil*, represented by the figure of the ‘Vieux’, is physically situated and linked to the *Hoot Ma Whaa Hap* region, rather than being constructed as the direct representation or representative of the Kanak people as a whole. On the other hand, the reference in this passage to ‘la case kanak’ is clearly a metaphor for the country in its entirety. The second textual description which refers directly to colonisation is that of the section representing the ‘pays Djubéa Kaponé’ (in the South of the *Grande Terre*), situated at the top of the sculpture. This description runs as follows: ‘[p]ourquoi le Sud tout en haut ? Parce que si la colonisation est arrivée par Pouébo et le Nord, elle s’est surtout fait sentir dans le Sud, « la tête de la pirogue ». Jean-Yves Némoadjou et Stéphane Palau ont représenté le pays Djubéa Kapone sous la forme d’un vieux guerrier assis, qui attend patiemment depuis 150 ans. S’il a les armes à la main, c’est pour dire qu’il ne les a jamais déposées. Mais ce sont les armes d’une autre époque, d’une histoire qu’on enterre pour en bâtir une nouvelle.’ In this description, while the reference to the ‘pirogue’ is clearly a metaphor for the whole of the New Caledonian archipelago, the ‘vieux guerrier assis’ is identified as representing ‘le pays Djubéa Kapone’, rather than the Kanak people as a whole, similar to the figure of the ‘Vieux’ in the carving for the ‘pays Hoot Ma Whaa Hap’.

⁴⁴ Henri Lepot, ‘Un symbole à déchiffrer de bas en haut’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10.

⁴⁵ Lurton (2007: 86).

⁴⁶ ‘Mwâ kâ’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10; ‘Mwâ Kâ’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 23/09/2005, 3; ‘Signification du MwâKâa’ (2007: 89).

⁴⁷ Ingrid Chanene, ‘Narcisse Décoiré, sculpteur de Sait-Louis : « C’est l’harmonie qui a sorti le Vieux »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10. Decoiré also notes that: ‘[c]ertains sont des artistes connus, d’autres des jeunes, ou même un simple pêcheur.’

⁴⁸ Henri Lepot, ‘Un symbole à déchiffrer de bas en haut’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10.

sculptors ‘representing’ each of the *aires coutumières*,⁴⁹ with the clear implication that the artists in question come from the relevant regions. However, this does not appear to be strictly accurate.⁵⁰ In generally omitting the artist’s names and the provenance of these individuals, the *Mwâ Kâ*’s symbolic clarity, consistency and therefore potency are discursively maximised.

The frequent reiteration by the local print media (particularly LNC and LI) and by various members of the *Comité 150 ans après* of the fact that the *Mwâ Kâ* comprises elements representing all of the Kanak *aires coutumières* is particularly significant for the construction of the symbolic meaning and legitimacy of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and initiative. For, while effectively recognising and accommodating a certain degree of diversity and difference between Kanak people, ‘culture’ and ‘custom’ from different regions, the *Mwâ Kâ* nevertheless represents a strong symbol of Kanak unity, achieved through the very form of the statue itself as a singular whole incorporating elements representative of Kanak diversity between *aires coutumières*. Together, these elements make up one *poteau central*, corresponding symbolically to one ‘people’, the unity of which is defined in both cultural/‘customary’ and in geographical terms by means of the sculpture’s representation and incorporation of all of the *aires coutumières*, which themselves represent a specifically Kanak-centred culturo-territorial (and inherently political) subdivision of the whole archipelago.

⁴⁹ Such as in Ingrid Chanene, ‘Cérémonie aujourd’hui baie de la Moselle’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 24/09/2003, 6; Xavier Serre and Ingrid Chanéné, ‘Des milliers de bras pour le mwâ kâ’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 25/09/2003, 2.

⁵⁰ This is indicated by the complete list of the names of all of the sculptors, which is reproduced in one article published by LNC in December 2003. This list runs as follows: ‘Gilles Kanva (*aires de Djubéa Kaponé et Hoot ma whaap*), Stéphane Palau et Jean-Yves Nemoadjou (*Djubéa Kaponé*), Joseph Sihaza et Elie Draikolo (*Drehu Iaai*), Lesly Palau (*Djubéa Kaponé*), Sylvain Tia (*Païci Camuki*), Paul Ayawa (*Païci et Ajie-Aro*), Robert Bedja (*Xarâcùù*), Ronald Nando (*Xarâcùù*) et Franci Uedre (*Nengone*).’ Charlotte Antoine, ‘Le mwâ kâ sera le mât d’une pirogue tournée vers l’avenir’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 22/12/2003, 10. It appears from this list that each artist’s work does not necessarily exclusively correlate to a specific region and the eight different sections of the *Mwâ Kâ* were not necessarily crafted by individuals from the particular *aires coutumières* in question. However, in the majority of instances the names of the individual sculptors involved are not provided in the coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in the local written press. Moreover, while according to an article published by LNC in September 2004 the sculptors’ names were to have been engraved on a stele to be placed near the *Mwâ Kâ* statue, this intention was never realised. See Henri Lepot, ‘Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 25/09/2004, 2.

The statue's symbolic representation of Kanak unity across *aires coutumières* is reinforced by Decoiré in the same September 2003 interview with LNC cited above, in which he contends that all of the sculptors involved:

*ont attrapé la parole que nous [le Comité 150 ans après] avions lancée [...]. Cette parole, ils l'ont mise sur le mwâ kê, tous ensemble et leurs ciseaux ont glissé sur le bois. C'est l'harmonie qui a sorti « le vieux », et ça s'est fait naturellement.*⁵¹

This posited 'natural harmony', which the *Mwâ Kâ* is represented here as translating sculpturally, can itself be seen to correspond implicitly to a 'natural harmony' which is simultaneously posited to exist between the eight Kanak *aires coutumières*, thereby naturalising, reinforcing and legitimising the singularity and unity of Kanak as a people with a shared cultural identity.

Significantly, these eight official *aires coutumières* themselves appear in the local written press coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* to be universally accepted and taken for granted as internally coherent, meaningful and appropriate categories in relation to persisting Kanak culturo-linguistic and 'customary' territorial groupings.⁵² Moreover, based on the textual descriptions of the carvings reproduced on several occasions in the local written press, the specific symbolic repertoires and imagery used in each section carved to represent the *aires coutumières* can themselves be seen to work to construct and reinforce the internal unity and coherence of the relevant *aire*, even while also acknowledging a certain degree of internal diversity and plurality in some cases.⁵³ The

⁵¹ Ingrid Chanéné, 'Narcisse Décoiré, sculpteur de Sait-Louis : « C'est l'harmonie qui a sorti le Vieux »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10.

⁵² Note that Guiart discusses the representation of the eight Kanak *aires coutumières* in the *Mwâ Kâ* statue in a critical article published in 2005 by LI. Guiart does not question the sculptural representation of the *aires* as an appropriate means of representing the Kanak people and their culture. However, he does criticise the particular manner (in terms of both form and content) in which this sculptural representation has been realised in the different sections of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue. Jean Guiart, 'Le mwâka : une aventure ambiguë', *Les Infos*, no. 157, 07/10/2005, 4. Guiart's strong critique can be contrasted to the positive evaluation of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue as a 'œuvre d'art' by another commentator, Adriano Favole, according to whom the *Mwâ Kâ* represents 'un art « métis », « contaminé » par un style totémique et chromatique novateur par rapport à l'art traditionnel kanak': Favole (2008: 423).

⁵³ See 'Mwâ kê', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10; 'Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 3; 'Signification du MwâKâa' (2007: 89).

majority of these descriptions can thus be seen to work to construct specific, coherent and seemingly static (or, indeed, ‘timeless’ and so ‘eternal’) identities for the relevant *aires coutumières* through the mobilisation of historically grounded (and therefore ‘legitimate’) ‘traditional’ or ‘customary’ Kanak references, symbols, narratives and identities.

The form of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and its carvings as they have been discursively represented in the public domain by the *Comité 150 ans après* can thus be seen to work to reinforce the legitimacy of these contemporary *aires coutumières* as a function of their posited historical continuity with Kanak ‘custom’ and realities in the pre-colonial past, rather than by reason of their relatively recent official institutional incorporation and ‘recognition’ in French law (a fact which is entirely occluded).⁵⁴ As noted above and discussed further in Annex 11, the *Comité 150 ans après* was created in 2003 under the auspices of the CNDPA and the *Sénat coutumier*.⁵⁵ The *Comité*’s inaugural President was Pierre Zéoula, who was also the President of the *Sénat coutumier* at that time. The involvement of the *Sénat coutumier* might be seen to explain, at least to some degree, the choice of (and strategy behind) uniting the eight *aires coutumières* as the

⁵⁴ One notable example of the discursive construction of the contemporary *aires coutumières* as grounded primarily (possibly even exclusively) in Kanak history, frames of reference and legitimacy appears in the 2007 article published by *Palabre coutumier* in which Adèle Buama is interviewed in relation to the the *Mwâ Kâ* statue. Part of Buama’s description and ‘explanation’ of the meaning and significance of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue’s form and carvings quoted in this article runs: ‘[L]e tronc de l’arbre est enfoui à deux mètres sous terre. C’est le monde invisible. Ça veut dire que nous confions cette partie aux esprits de nos ancêtres. Ils soutiennent les huit aires. L’aire coutumière dans le monde kanak n’a pas de définition spatiale mais généalogique, elle est liée à l’histoire du peuple.’ Lurton (2007: 86). In this passage Buama constructs the eight contemporary *aires coutumières* as having meaning and legitimacy by reason of their embodying a ‘traditional’ Kanak mode/form and understanding of history – ‘customary’ genealogies. Moreover, she invokes (seemingly generic, or shared and ‘universal’) Kanak ancestor figures, the ‘*esprits de nos ancêtres*’, which are identified as physically (and metaphorically) ‘supporting’ (and so legitimating) these Kanak *aires coutumières* united in the *Mwâ Kâ* statue. Considered in the light of the political and legitimating functions of different types of Kanak historical narratives (including foundational ‘myths’ and ‘family’ or ‘clan’ genealogies, all of which mobilise different kinds of ‘ancestor’ figures) identified by Naepels (see Naepels (1998: 86-93)), Buama’s discursive construction of the meaning and significance of the bottom and middle sections of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue’s carvings might be viewed as similarly working in the same Kanak discursive mode to assert and reinforce the posited historical and political legitimacy of the eight *aires coutumières* and the Kanak people as a collective whole, represented by the unification of these *aires coutumières* in the *Mwâ Kâ* statue itself, ‘[d]ans une logique de l’autochtonie’, to use Naepels’s phrase (Naepels (1998: 91)).

⁵⁵ ‘Un « Comité du 150^e » pour commémorer le 24 septembre’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 13/06/2003, 13; Raphaël Mapou (2003).

primary physical means of representing the unity of the Kanak people in the *Mwâ Kâ* statue. Reinforcing the salience in local public discourse of the eight official *aires coutumières* as meaningful and legitimate culturo-territorial and affective categories for Kanak people can be seen to reinforce the legitimacy of the *Sénat coutumier* itself.

The posited continuity of the contemporary *aires coutumières* with past and present Kanak ‘cultural’ and ‘customary’ realities identifiable in the discourse of both the *Comité 150 ans après* and LNC in 2003 (which broadly appropriates the discourse of the *Comité*) is also mobilised by the members of the *Sénat coutumier* as a means of conferring ‘customary’ political legitimacy on that institution as it is presently constituted, ‘*selon les usages reconnus par la coutume*’,⁵⁶ beyond the political legitimacy conferred on it as an institution created by the Noumea Accord.⁵⁷ The same schema appears to be echoed in the broad discursive construction by the *Comité* of the *Mwâ Kâ*’s own meaning in relation to the Noumea Accord. For, while the *Mwâ Kâ* is constructed in the discourse of the *Comité* as being designed to give concrete effect to the Noumea Accord’s socio-political project of forging a ‘common destiny’, the nature of this project and the very foundation of its legitimacy are reformulated on ‘Kanak terms’ through the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and initiative.

The link between the *Mwâ Kâ* and the affirmation of the continuity and legitimacy of Kanak ‘customary’ authorities through the affirmation of the continuity and legitimacy of the *aires coutumières* is also reinforced by the overall form of the statue itself as a *poteau central*. This line of reasoning is similar to that advanced by Bensa in relation to the reformulation and ‘democratisation’ of the ‘traditional’ *case* (notably through the ‘suppression’ of the *poteau central*) in the so-called ‘*souvenirs de cases*’ designed by Piano in the main building of the CCT, discussed in Chapter Two and Annex 5. Inverting this reasoning, the mobilisation of the Kanak metaphor of the construction of a *grande case* to represent the collective construction of the country’s ‘common destiny’ and local ‘citizenship’ (interrelated concepts forming key elements of the same

⁵⁶ *Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, article 137.

⁵⁷ See the discussion in Annex 1.

socio-political project) through the erection of a *poteau central* can be seen to implicitly reconfigure the legitimacy of that ‘common destiny’, local ‘citizenship’ and socio-political project on ‘Kanak terms’.⁵⁸ Particularly given its physical form as a *poteau central* uniting the eight Kanak *aires coutumières* in its carvings and in light of the involvement of the *Sénat coutumier* in the initiative, it would appear that, in contrast to the CCT’s ‘*souvenirs de cases*’, the *Mwâ Kâ* statue largely retains the ‘original’ socio-political ‘content’ of these symbols. The metaphorical *grande case* of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue consequently appears to posit the continuing legitimacy and purported primacy of Kanak ‘customary’ authorities associated with the present-day official Kanak *aires coutumières* as social and (most significantly) political actors in the country as it is currently being constructed and as it is projected as existing in the future.⁵⁹ This analysis is confirmed by LI’s suggestion in September 2003 that, ‘[a]u travers de cette commémoration’, ‘une volonté des coutumiers de refaire leur Accord de Nouméa’ can be identified, and by Mandaoué’s broadly affirmative (if moderating) response.⁶⁰

It should also be noted that, unlike both *Mélanésie 2000*’s site and the site of the CCT’s *aire coutumière* (itself also called ‘*Mwakaa*’), the particular place and role of the Kanak group broadly representing the ‘*maîtres de la terre*’ of the Noumea area (where the *Mwâ Kâ* statue was ultimately permanently erected) is considerably less apparent in the

⁵⁸ This might also be seen to correlate to the position discussed in Annex 11 that was articulated subsequent to the *colloque* organised by the *Comité* and the CNDPA in August 2003, which purported to affirm and draw on the terms of Noumea Accord while arguing for the need to ‘reinforce’ and ‘extend’ that agreement ‘*par une affirmation du droit du peuple kanak*’ (this ‘*droit*’ being constructed as synonymous with ‘Kanak identity’), requiring ‘*une autre approche de la démocratie et de la citoyenneté, et la restauration du peuple kanak dans sa souveraineté et sa dignité*’: *Comité 150 ans après*, ‘« Peuple, Terre et Droits de l’homme »’, *Les Infos*, no. 47, 15/08/2003, 2; CNDPA (2003). See the discussion in Annex 11.

⁵⁹ This is also confirmed by the position of the carving of a Kanak *grande case* at the top of the statue, which is consequently supported by and founded on the eight Kanak *aires coutumières*, which are themselves identified in the discourse of the *Comité 150 ans après* as supported by and founded on purportedly shared Kanak ‘elder’ and ‘ancestor’ figures, as discussed above.

⁶⁰ Mandaoué is cited as responding: ‘[o]ui, c’est un peu ça. Refaire, c’est un bien grand mot. Nous voulons simplement le conforter, le réaliser. Parler, exprimer des choses, c’est bien, mais les réaliser c’est mieux. C’est comme cela qu’on voit que ce qu’on a dit est sincère.’ Thierry Squillario, ‘Georges Mandaoué : « Le 24 septembre, c’est le début d’un nouveau soleil »’, *Les Infos*, no. 52, 19/09/2003, 2.

form of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue⁶¹ and in the discursive representation of its overall symbolic meaning by the *Comité 150 ans après*, as reported in the local written press and other locally produced materials.⁶² The fact that the statue was made in Saint-Louis, just outside Noumea, and, even more particularly, that it was named in the language of the area, *Djubéa*,⁶³ are potentially significant in this regard, although this never appears to be expressly stated by the *Comité*.

It appears from a few brief references in LNC's coverage of the events organised by the *Comité* to mark the 24 September anniversary in some years that 'customary' representatives of the Southern region including Noumea⁶⁴ did play a particular role (effectively acting as the '*maîtres de la terre*' of the area) in the 'customary' ceremonies associated with the *Mwâ Kâ*, particularly in welcoming Kanak representatives from other *aires coutumières* who were in turn to be associated with the major public events around the *Mwâ Kâ* involving the participation of Kanak and non-Kanak local communities. However, the role of the *Sénat coutumier* (constructed as the 'customary' representatives of 'the Kanak people' as a whole) was largely foregrounded in the coverage of these annual events published in the local written press. Indeed, the particular 'customary' role of the '*maîtres de la terre*' appears from this press coverage and other local publications to have been broadly transferred to 'the Kanak people'

⁶¹ The only aspect of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue's carvings that might indicate a special position of the '*maîtres de la terre*' of the Noumea area is the placement of the section representing the '*pays Djubéa Kapone*' above all of the other *aires coutumières* at the top of the statue pole, just underneath the *grande case* with the *flèche faîtière* which form its highest element. However, in the textual descriptions of the symbolic meaning of these sections of the statue, the significance of this placement of the '*pays Djubéa Kapone*' is in no way linked to the particular position or role of the '*maîtres de la terre*' in relation to the project. Rather, the significance of this placement is constructed in relation to the history of French colonisation in this *aire* in comparison to elsewhere in the country. 'Mwâ kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10; 'Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 23/09/2005, 3; 'Signification du MwâKâa' (2007: 89).

⁶² Including, for example, various articles published in *Palabre coutumier*, the journal of the *Sénat coutumier*, and the film produced by the *Comité 150 ans après* on the official inauguration of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* on the 24 September 2005: *Comité 150 ans après* (2005).

⁶³ This second aspect is similarly significant in the case of the CCT's '*aire coutumière*' or *Mwakaa*, as discussed in Chapter Two.

⁶⁴ These representatives are not identified specifically, but referred to as the '*autorités Djubéa-Kaponé*', as simply '*Djubéa-Kaponé*', or as '*l'aire Djubéa-Kaponé*'. See 'Le 24 septembre autour du Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 24/09/2004, 5; Xavier Serre, 'Deux jours de fête avec toutes les communautés', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 23/09/2005, 3.

collectively (and their ‘customary’ representatives in the *Sénat coutumier*) as the country’s first inhabitants.

However, various criticisms have been expressed in the public domain, including particularly through articles published in LI, by some Kanak people in relation to the ‘customary’ legitimacy of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in Noumea⁶⁵ and/or the legitimate ‘customary’ role of the *Sénat coutumier* and its members.⁶⁶ In contrast, in the coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* from 2003 to 2005 published by LNC, the existence of any discord within ‘the Kanak community’ in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative was virtually entirely occluded.

However, the degree to which the *Mwâ Kâ*’s implicit reconfiguration of the Noumea Accord’s ‘common destiny’ project ‘on Kanak terms’ (specifically designed to construct as primary the political legitimacy of the officially recognised Kanak ‘customary’ authorities as a function of their posited historical precedence and continuity, rather than by reason of their official institutional incorporation and recognition in the Noumea

⁶⁵ Ignace Païta, purporting to represent the group having ‘true’ ‘customary’ authority over the Noumea area (but which has not been officially recognised as such and which appears to have been excluded from participating in the *Mâ Kâ* initiative) wrote several articles published by LI in 2004 and 2005 in which the *Mâ Kâ* and the *Sénat coutumier* (particularly in terms of its *Djubéa-Kaponé* representatives and in relation to the physical implantation of the premises of the *Sénat coutumier* in Noumea on the Nouville peninsula) were severely criticised on the basis of their posited ‘customary’ illegitimacy. Ignace Païta, ‘Tribune libre...’, *Les Infos*, no. 105, 24/09/2004, 1; Ignace Païta, ‘Tribune libre...’, *Les Infos*, no. 109, 22/10/2004, 1; Djumwâ Ignace Païta, ‘Sénat coutumier ? Du fait...’, *Les Infos*, no. 155, 23/09/2005, 3. In these articles Païta represents the *Mwâ Kâ* as ‘un symbole vide de sens’, ‘non-Kanak’, ‘établi en dehors de la coutume’ and ‘sans lien avec la terre où il se trouve’. Païta’s arguments in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* are clearly geared towards strengthening his demand for the ‘rétablissement’ of the ‘traditional’ *chefferie* he purports to represent on its ‘terre d’origine’ (that is, Noumea). In his 2005 article, Païta thus calls on ‘les habitants de ce pays soucieux du respect de la coutume’ to support the ‘Grande Chefferie N’umia Kambwa Wecho Pweyta [...] dans sa lutte légitime et à boycotter les manifestations politiques liées au poteau dit Mwaka.’

⁶⁶ For instance, Nidoïsh Naisseline has broadly criticised the role currently played by the *Sénat coutumier* in ‘customarily’ welcoming foreign dignitaries to the country in Noumea, purportedly on behalf of the Kanak people as a whole (that is, effectively positioning itself as legitimately representing the Kanak ‘customary’ ‘*maîtres de la terre*’ in relation to the entire country). According to Naisseline: ‘*le Sénat coutumier ne correspond à aucune réalité culturelle locale, il n’a donc pas de légitimité à parler de et à recevoir la coutume kanak à la place des clans et des chefferies, comme il le fait actuellement, à Nouméa, lors de la visite de personnalités de marque.*’ Nidoïsh Naisseline, ‘Du Sénat coutumier’, *Les infos*, no. 148, 05/08/2005, 3. Presumably the same logic would apply in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative and the ‘customary’ exchanges between ‘the Kanak people’ through these same ‘customary’ representatives and the country’s non-Kanak communities.

Accord and in French law), might have been accepted by others, both Kanak and non-Kanak, in New Caledonian society remains largely open to question.

In terms of LNC's coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* in 2003, the statue's representation of Kanak indigeneity is implicitly emphasised, although the specifically political implications of this are not directly highlighted.⁶⁷ On several occasions in this newspaper's coverage published in 2003 and 2004 the *Mwâ Kâ* statue pole is identified as being referred to directly as a person – specifically as '*le Vieux*' – by different Kanak individuals involved in the project. Such references provide another example the way in which the legitimacy of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative and its expressed goal to concretely realise the Noumea Accord's socio-political project was not articulated by members of the *Comité* as being primarily or exclusively sourced in the politico-juridical agreement and framework of the Noumea Accord itself.⁶⁸ Addressing the *Mwâ Kâ* statue directly in this manner as '*le Vieux*' might be understood in reference to the symbolism and treatment 'traditionally' accorded to the trunk of a *houp* tree which has been designated

⁶⁷ In keeping with the 'traditional' method of making the *poteau central* of a *grande case*, the *Mwâ Kâ* sculpture has been crafted from the trunk of a *houp* tree (*Montrouziera Cauliflora*), a species endemic to New Caledonia (Kasarhérou, Wedoye, Boulay and Merleau-Ponty (1998: 51); Bachet (2008 : 10)), in this instance harvested from the '*forêt de la Thy*', situated above Saint-Louis (Del Rio (1997a: 48); Ingrid Chanene, 'Cérémonie aujourd'hui baie de la Moselle', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/09/2003, 6). *Houp* trees of the size used to create the *Mwâ Kâ* are now rare and LNC highlighted in its commentary that the '*vieux houp*' used to create the *Mwâ Kâ* would have been '*né avant l'arrivée des blancs*': Henri Lepot, 'Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 2. The newspaper similarly highlights this aspect of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue in its 2007 coverage of the 24 September, stating that '[l]'arbre choisi par le concepteur Narcisse Decoiré était déjà debout quand le premier Blanc a posé le pied sur le sol calédonien': Marc Baltzer, 'Citoyenneté partagée', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2007, 2. The very material from which the sculpture was created can thus be seen to have been implicitly constructed in LNC's coverage as reinforcing the *Mwâ Kâ*'s symbolic (re)affirmation of the antecedence of Kanak people (or, indeed, of the Kanak people) in the archipelago and their character as 'endemic' or 'autochthonous' to the country, analogous to the *houp* tree itself. It is significant that this anteriority was implicitly highlighted in this manner by this traditionally conservative, anti-independence and itself predominantly 'non-Kanak' newspaper, given its potential political implications. The newspaper's implicit acknowledgement of Kanak anteriority in this instance might be viewed as an illustration of the adoption of the Noumea Accord as a dominant overarching discursive frame of reference by LNC.

⁶⁸ See Decoiré in Ingrid Chanene, 'Narcisse Decoiré, sculpteur de Saint-Louis : « C'est l'harmonie qui a sorti le Vieux »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10; Joachim Boano in 'Le Mwâ kâ restitué aux coutumiers à quelques jours de son déménagement', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 15/09/2004, available online only at <<http://www.lnc.nc>> (from the 8 to the 23 September 2004 no printed editions of LNC appear to have been produced due to a strike).

as the *poteau central* of a *grande case* under construction.⁶⁹ In the case of the *Mwâ Kâ* project, it can certainly be viewed as a discursive strategy working to imbue the *Mwâ Kâ* statue as a whole with the same authority and legitimacy as Kanak ‘elder’ or ‘ancestor’ figures.⁷⁰

However, in explaining its contention that the *Mwâ Kâ* ‘*génère la poésie des symboles*’, LNC stated in 2004 that:

[L]es uns l'appellent le « *Vieux* » et lui parlent directement, curieuse survivance animiste en terre évangélisée. Les autres le voient comme le poteau central de la grande case commune, ou comme le mât de la pirogue Calédonie. C'est plus qu'une œuvre d'art : la part kanak dans Nouméa, la place faite aux autres par le peuple premier, le symbole du destin commun, le premier signe identitaire... C'est ainsi que l'a voulu le « Comité 150 ans après » pour marquer l'anniversaire du 24 septembre 1853, date de la prise de possession de la Nouvelle-Calédonie par la France.⁷¹

This pejorative characterisation as a ‘*curieuse survivance animiste en terre évangélisée*’ of references to the statue as the ‘*Vieux*’ and the act of addressing it directly could be seen to construct an implicit, hierarchically ordered division between Western religion and the ‘primitive’ ‘animism’ attributed to Kanak people prior to religious conversion, and could consequently be viewed as an out-of-hand dismissal and stigmatisation of past and contemporary Kanak ‘cultural’ difference.

It can certainly be contrasted to the treatment in this passage of the interpretation or representation of the *Mwâ Kâ* as the metaphorical ‘*poteau central de la grande case commune*’ or the ‘*mât de la pirogue Calédonie*’, on which no aspersions are cast, despite the apparently similar provenance of these metaphors in Kanak ‘cultural’

⁶⁹ See Boulay (1990a: 126); Kasarhérou, Wedoye, Boulay and Merleau-Ponty (1998: 50).

⁷⁰ According to Mokaddem, the ‘*terme de « vieux » signifie, dans le lexique kanak, toutes les personnes faisant partie de la lignée ancestrale, les morts comme les vivants*’: Mokaddem (2005a: 212).

⁷¹ Henri Lepot, ‘Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 2.

references. However, LNC's acceptance of these latter constructions as appropriate metaphors to describe New Caledonia as a socio-political entity developing into the future might be seen to be predicated on their construction as inclusive of all established New Caledonian inhabitants, in line with the contemporary Noumea Accord frame of reference. Moreover, whether the specifically Kanak political symbolism of the *grande case* metaphor as it is articulated and mobilised in the *Mwâ Kâ* project by the *Comité* (relating to the affirmation of the primary political role of Kanak 'customary' representatives in the 'common destiny' project) is understood or accepted by the newspaper remains unclear. This can be seen to raise similar inter-textual and inter-discursive considerations to those discussed in Chapter One in relation to the global failure of the 'mainstream' newspapers to treat the inherently political nature and potential political significance of the '*démarche coutumière*' engaged through the *Mélanésie 2000* festival.

Erecting the *Mwâ Kâ* in the city's centre: the politics of place

The placement of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue has been the subject of considerable controversy since September 2003. Central to this controversy is the question of the symbolic meaning of the statue itself and the intention behind the events organised to mark the 24 September anniversary from 2003.

The original intention of the *Comité 150 ans après* was for the population to erect the *Mwâ Kâ* in the the *Place des Cocotiers's Place Courbet* on the 150th anniversary of French colonisation. The *Place des Cocotiers* is universally recognised as the physical and symbolic heart of Noumea, '*la ville blanche*'.⁷² As discussed in Annex 12, the present-day *Place des Cocotiers* is replete with monuments and symbols representing French colonial history and dominance in New Caledonia. Furthermore, the *Place des Cocotiers* is entirely devoid of Kanak cultural symbols or valorising references, despite

⁷² See the discussion of the politics of place in relation to Noumea in Annex 1.

the large number of Kanak people who now make frequent use of this space and the increasing Kanak presence in the capital due to recent migration patterns within the archipelago.⁷³ Given the highly charged and heavily laden social, political and historical symbolism of this urban space and the persisting 'European' and 'loyalist' political dominance in Noumea, it is hardly surprising that a Kanak project to erect a statue readily identifiable as a strong symbol of Kanak unity, identity and presence in the *Place des Cocotiers* on the 150th anniversary of French colonisation was highly contentious. As noted by Nic Maclellan, the issue of the statue's placement 'became a test of wills'.⁷⁴

According to Moréo-cee in an interview published by LNC just prior to the 24 September 2003, the *Comité* had chosen '*la place des Cocotiers car beaucoup de Kanak viennent s'y reposer mais il n'y a aucune représentation de leur culture, contrairement à La Foa*'.⁷⁵ Moréo-cee attributes the *Comité*'s difficulties in relation to obtaining permission to erect the statue in the *Place des Cocotiers* to the RPCR Mayor of Noumea, Jean Lèques, and contrasts the Mayor's position to the apparent approval of the initiative by Jacques Lafleur and Pierre Frogier.⁷⁶

However, LNC reports in the following edition that Lafleur '« *comprend et approuve* »' the Mayor's refusal to allow the *Mwâ Kâ*'s erection in the *Place des Cocotiers*,

⁷³ As noted by Maclellan (2005: 6).

⁷⁴ Maclellan (2005: 6).

⁷⁵ Xavier Serre, 'Lucienne Moréo-cee, comité 150 ans après : « Un poteau pour enterrer les différences »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 2. Moréo-cee is referring here to the central public square of La Foa, the *Place Georges-Guillermet*, inaugurated in December 2001. This square includes 14 large sculptures in the form of carved statue poles created by New Caledonian artists (including Kanak artists). However, the two principal monuments in the square valorise European settlement in the region: one monument is dedicated to the Colonel Gally Passebosc, who died during the 1878 Kanak rebellion; the other is dedicated to the local '*pionniers*' and was erected in 1953 on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of French colonisation. See Delathière (2004: 227); Philippe Gomès, '« Vouloir vivre ensemble »', *Les Infos*, no. 54, 03/10/2003, 2. This second monument is discussed further in Annex 10.

⁷⁶ Xavier Serre, 'Lucienne Moréo-cee, comité 150 ans après : « Un poteau pour enterrer les différences »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 2. At this time, Lafleur was the President of the Southern Province and of the RPCR, and Frogier was the President of the Government of New Caledonia and Lafleur's designated successor at the head of the RPCR.

purportedly: *'parce que la place vient d'être entièrement refaite, de belle manière, et que l'implantation du poteau en aurait dénaturé l'harmonie, voire même obligé à en casser un morceau.'*⁷⁷ The use of the verb *'dénaturer'* in this context is particularly significant given its negative connotations and the relatively explicit acknowledgement in this statement that the so-called ('natural') 'harmony' of the *Place des Cocotiers* as it currently exists correlates to its exclusively 'European' and, indeed, colonial symbolic repertoire – a position which is entirely at odds with the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative. However, according to LNC's report, Lafleur nevertheless *'s'est dit sensible à l'initiative du comité'*, and offered the premises of the Southern Province as a place of 'asylum' for the *Mwâ Kâ* statue, which he would 'welcome' there on a permanent or temporary basis.⁷⁸

On the 24 September, the *Mwâ Kâ* statue was indeed installed inside the large fence securing the outer parameter of the building which houses the Southern Province at the far end of the *Baie de la Moselle*, well away from the *Place des Cocotiers*. In an interview published by LNC on the 25 September, Mandaoué affirmed that the initiative was still meaningful and significant.⁷⁹ However, as noted by Chappell, some Kanak activists criticised Lafleur's offer as an opportunistic appropriation of the *Mwâ Kâ*

⁷⁷ Ingrid Chanéné, 'La Province offre sa cour au poteau du 150e', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 24/09/2003, 6.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Thus, in response to the newspaper's question as to his reaction to the provisional placement of the statue on the grounds of the Southern Province, Mandaoué states: *'[d]ans mon discours, j'ai voulu donner confiance aux gens par rapport aux choses que l'on a actées. Pour nous, le 24 septembre repose sur un esprit d'ouverture.'* Xavier Serre and Ingrid Chanéné, 'Georges Mandaoué, sénateur coutumier et secrétaire général du Comité 150 ans après – « Il faut se comprendre les uns et les autres »', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 25/09/2003, 3. One week later, Mandaoué is reported as responding in a similar manner to the following question posed by LNC during a press conference with the *Comité*: *'[c]ertains ont été déçus de ne pas avoir pu planter le Mwâ Kâ place des Cocotiers. Qu'avez-vous à leur dire ?'* According to the newspaper, Mandaoué replied: *'[e]n fait, en acceptant de planter le Mwâ Kâ face au musée territorial, le comité a fait preuve d'intelligence. On aurait pu décider de tout annuler mais on a préféré montrer que, malgré les difficultés et le manque d'ouverture d'esprit de certains, nous étions capables de faire passer nos messages. Il faut faire des efforts de chaque côté pour se comprendre. Mais ce travail doit être réalisé maintenant, à l'heure où nous essayons de construire, ensemble, un pays.'* Xavier Serre, 'Comité «150 ans après»: « Le Mwâ Kâ est vivant ! »', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 03/10/2003, 6.

initiative and its acceptance by the *Comité* ‘as yet another sign of submission’.⁸⁰ According LCB, Françoise Caillard withdrew from her position as Treasurer of the *Comité 150 ans après*, ‘le soir même du 24 septembre 2003, lorsqu’elle a vu le Mwa Ka partir vers la province Sud.’⁸¹ The paper would later quote from a letter by Caillard on this subject as follows:

[j]e milite pour l’application de l’Accord de Nouméa. Pour moi, “le Kanak au centre du dispositif,” inscrit dans le préambule, aurait pu être symbolisé par le MWA KA au centre ville, qui est la place des Cocotiers [...].⁸²

This withdrawal was not reported in the coverage of LNC or LI, and only arose incidentally in LCB.

In an article published by LNC in October 2003 ‘technical’ reasons are foregrounded in relation to Lèques’s justification of his decision not to allow the statue’s erection in the *Place des Cocotiers*.⁸³ Lèques is quoted as responding to criticisms of his decision voiced by two (non-RPCR) members of the Municipal Council as follows:

[c]es quatre places [de la place des Cocotiers] font un ensemble [...]. Celle souhaitée pour le mwâ kê était là où il y a le plus de réseaux enterrés, où il y aurait eu le plus de problèmes techniques. Il n’y avait pas possibilité de le mettre là.⁸⁴

Moreover, according to LNC’s report, Lèques stressed that Kanak culture is not absent from the capital city, citing in this regard the fact that the Municipality had ceded the

⁸⁰ Chappell (2004: 392).

⁸¹ ‘Françoise Caillard était partie depuis longtemps...’, *Le Chien bleu*, no. 76, November 2004, 2.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ ‘Le mwâ kê s’invite’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 10/10/2003, 16.

⁸⁴ Ibid. This might be contrasted to the view expressed in the satirical cartoon published by LCB in October 2003, entitled ‘CHAQUE CHOSE À SA PLACE’ and depicting Lèques as a guard dog chasing a Kanak man holding a carved statue pole from the *Place des Cocotiers* with the caption: ‘DÉGAGE AVEC TON BOUT DE BOIS POURRI DE MA BELLE PLACE À MOI !’. Murgier, ‘CHAQUE CHOSE À SA PLACE’, *Le Chien bleu*, no. 62, October 2003, 3.

land on which the CCT now stands.⁸⁵ Indeed, Lèques apparently suggested that the site of the CCT would itself be '*tout à fait propice à l'implantation du mwâ kâ*.'⁸⁶

Lèques's position in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* and its appropriate placement in Noumea tends towards the construction of a strict segregation of space, the 'European' (non-Kanak) owned and dominated city centre (epitomised by the *Place des Cocotiers*, with its colonial monuments and references) being distinguished and separated from the Kanak owned and/or dominated space at the city's outskirts, including particularly the site of the CCT. Such a segregation of space, symbols and monuments might be seen to echo the segregation instituted during the colonial period with the creation of the '*réserves indigènes*' and the policy of Kanak '*cantonnement*', discussed in Annex 1. Moreover, despite the official reasons given for his decision, Lèques's refusal to allow the *Mwâ Kâ*'s erection in the *Place des Cocotiers* can be identified as resulting from a perception of the initiative as a Kanak *revendication*, including precisely in relation to this persisting segregation and Kanak exclusion.

At a press conference in early October 2003, Moréo-cee maintained that, despite Lèques's refusal, '*il n'y avait rien de politique*' in the *Comité*'s choice of the *Place des Cocotiers* as the site of the statue's erection.⁸⁷ Similarly, Mandaoué is quoted on two occasions by LNC in 2005 as stating that:

[i]l a fallu trois ans pour que tout le monde comprenne que les Kanak ne voulaient pas prendre possession de la ville mais plutôt ériger le poteau

⁸⁵ 'Le mwâ kâ s'invite', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 10/10/2003, 16.

⁸⁶ Ibid. According to LI, another local politician, Didier Leroux, also favoured the erection of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue in 2003 on the site of the CCT rather than in the centre of the city, although his position in relation to the initiative appears to have changed in subsequent years. Reporting on the event organised around the *Mwâ Kâ* to mark the 24 September 2005, LI makes the following comments in relation to Leroux's involvement: '*il faut reconnaître à Didier Leroux le mérite d'avoir vaincu ses peurs et d'avoir surmonté ses douleurs. Il y a quelques années, en effet, le leader de l'Alliance, non signataire de l'Accord de Nouméa, déclarait sans ambages à ses militants qu'il préférerait voir le Mwâ Kaa planté au Centre Culturel Tjibaou, mais surtout pas en pleine ville. Aujourd'hui au pouvoir, le super « ministre » du gouvernement Thémereau ne tient plus les mêmes discours.*' Thierry Squillario, 'Le poteau qui cache la forêt', *Les Infos*, no. 156, 30/09/2005, 2. Leroux's view on the *Mwâ Kâ* in 2003 was not mentioned in the coverage published at that time by the local written press.

⁸⁷ Xavier Serre, 'Comité « 150 ans après » : « Le Mwâ Kâ est vivant ! »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 03/10/2003, 6.

*central d'une grande case dans laquelle toutes les communautés du territoire ont leur place.*⁸⁸

But despite these express statements made by the *Comité 150 ans après* denying the project's politically-interested implication or engagement, the aspects of *revendication* in the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative can be seen to persist, and questions relating to the *Mwâ Kâ*'s 'true' symbolic meaning, potential political implication and the best placement for the statue in Noumea have remained controversial.⁸⁹

The solution finally agreed upon in 2003 by all parties, including the Mayor and the *Comité 150 ans après*, was to erect the *Mwâ Kâ* on a site within the city several blocks from the *Place des Cocotiers*, directly opposite the *Musée de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* in the *Baie de la Moselle*.⁹⁰ This site, which was at that time part of the parking lot which had already served as the venue for the events organised by the *Comité* around the *Mwâ Kâ* on the 24 September 2003, was to be transformed into a public square and landscaped garden around the *Mwâ Kâ* statue.

⁸⁸ 'Deux jours de fête autour du Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/09/2005, 5. This quotation is also reproduced (if in slightly different terms) in the following edition: Xavier Serre, 'Mwâ Kâ : La place du destin commun', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 2.

⁸⁹ In October 2003, several short texts published by LCB in its '*Courrier d'électeurs*' rubric can be seen to highlight the ambiguities of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative and its very different interpretations. For instance, one text signed 'Yereve' runs: '[L]es remerciements du peuple kanak à messieurs Frogier, Lafleur et Lèques, pour avoir accepté le poteau central de la case kanak ou « mwaka » dans la ville de Nouméa. C'est 150 ans après que la reconnaissance de la tribu de Nouméa est acceptée.' 'Appréciation du « Kanak » à travers l'organisation de la journée du 24 septembre 2003 : Le mwaka', *Le Chien bleu*, no. 62, October 2003, 2. Another text, signed 'S.D.', states that, if the *poteau* represents 'un appel à la réconciliation, on ne peut être que d'accord. Dans ce cas, ils peuvent le planter où ils veulent. Mais si c'est une manipulation qui dissimule une revendication de Nouméa, là, je ne suis pas d'accord et je ne comprends pas pourquoi Lafleur a accepté cette manœuvre. L'avenir dira qui a manipulé l'autre.' 'Mwaka : qui manipule l'autre ?', *Le Chien bleu*, no. 62, October 2003, 2. In contrast, no suggestion of manipulation on the part of either the *Comité 150 ans après* or Jacques Lafleur appears in the 2003 coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* published by LNC. Nor does the newspaper itself cast aspersions on the reasons provided by Jean Lèques for his refusal to permit the erection of the statue in the *Place des Cocotiers*.

⁹⁰ In February 2004, Lafleur appears to have asserted that this solution was originally proposed by him. 'Gouaro Deva : la polémique enfle – Jacques Lafleur : « J'ai été trompé »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/02/2004, 10.

The *Place du Mwâ Kâ*

According to LNC's coverage, the design of the new '*Place du Mwâ Kâ*' was developed jointly by the *Comité 150 ans après* and the Municipality in late 2003.⁹¹ The metaphorical 'first stone' of the square was laid on the 20 December during an official ceremony (including both Kanak 'customary' and Western-style elements) attended by '*des membres du Comité « 150 ans après », des coutumiers, des parlementaires, des responsables industriels*'.⁹² The work of realising the square was to have been financed by the Government of New Caledonia and by the three Provinces in equal parts, with the Municipal Council of Noumea providing the land (ownership of which it retained) and the necessary 'technical assistance'.⁹³ At least until 2007, the Municipality appears to have financed the maintenance of the square once it was completed, although this responsibility was to have been transferred to the New Caledonian Government which had, in 2005, officially agreed to take responsibility for organising the celebrations at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* on the 24 September each year as the newly decreed '*Journée de la citoyenneté*'.⁹⁴

In its report on this ceremony in December 2003, LNC includes quotations from the speeches made by various representatives. Among those identified as having spoken on behalf of the *Comité*, the Pastor Watré Hanyé is cited as having highlighted the significance of the local politico-administrative authorities' decision to accept the implantation of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue within the city, in its own square, which he represents as: '*un lieu symbolique car nous sommes sur le sol de la mairie de Nouméa*

⁹¹ Charlotte Antoine, 'Le mwâ kâ sera le mât d'une pirogue tournée vers l'avenir', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/12/2003, 10.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ 'Le Mwâ Kâ retiré de l'ordre du jour', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/02/2004, 16; JB, 'Le Mwâ Kâ n'en finit plus de subir des dégradations', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/02/2007, 8. However, it is unclear whether the Islands Province ultimately contributed funds for this project – see Le bureau du MPF (Mouvement pour la France), 'Communiqué', *Les Infos*, no. 156, 30/09/2005, 2.

⁹⁴ JB, 'Le Mwâ Kâ n'en finit plus de subir des dégradations', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/02/2007, 8.

et de la Province sud. C'est une action qui marque l'unité de l'esprit et le lien de la paix.'⁹⁵

Lafleur is quoted as having affirmed:

*[L]'idée d'avoir cette œuvre d'art dans la capitale de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, au milieu des places de commémoration qui ont appartenu à d'autres peuples était la bonne. Elle donne aux Mélanésiens la place qui leur manquait.*⁹⁶

While Lafleur's reference to the *Mwâ Kâ* statue as a 'work of art' might be seen to valorise the statue, it can also be seen to reduce the potentially broader (and political) value and significance of the associated initiatives to a question of aesthetics. Moreover, Lafleur can be seen to affirm and approve of the segregation of public space within the capital city, with separate commemorative areas being allocated to different (ethno-culturally and politically defined) 'peoples'.⁹⁷ Moreover, Lafleur's approval of the construction of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* dedicated '*aux Mélanésiens*' stems from that fact that such a place for this group was previously lacking, so that this new square will achieve equality between all (ethno-culturally and politically defined) groups. As seen in previous Chapters, this prioritisation of equality between Kanak and non-Kanak groups in New Caledonia, which might be seen to be exemplified by the construction of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* itself, works to neutralise and negate any claims advanced by Kanak people to a special, primary position and status on the basis of their indigeneity and colonisation.

As suggested by Lafleur's statement, the symbolic significance of the site chosen for the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* is also connected to particular features of the surrounding urban landscape, including notably the parking lot within which it has been constructed, the

⁹⁵ Charlotte Antoine, 'Le mwâ kâ sera le mât d'une pirogue tournée vers l'avenir', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/12/2003, 10.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ It is also worth noting that, according to LI in 2004, it was actually Lafleur, and not Lèques, who ultimately held and exercised the '*pouvoir de décision*' regarding the placement of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue in Noumea in 2003. PC, 'Le retour du Mwâ Kâ', *Les Infos*, no. 103, 10/09/2004, 3. However, both appear to have had a very similar outlook in relation to this issue.

two adjacent commemorative spaces (the *Place Yves Tual* and the *Mémorial américain*), and the Museum of New Caledonia situated opposite the square. This surrounding landscape and the decentralised location of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* have been seen by a number of individuals and groups to negate, neutralise or render problematic the symbolism and effectiveness of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and initiative.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, in 2004 LI identified the creation of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* around this ‘Kanak symbol’ as a sign of positive progress and change for the city, inscribed in the dynamic of the Noumea Accord.⁹⁹

The discursive construction of the *Mwâ Kâ*: the past–future nexus

As indicated previously, since its creation in 2003 the *Mwâ Kâ* statue has been discursively constructed by the *Comité 150 ans après* as forming part of a future-oriented process. This process has itself been characterised in the public domain in several ways by the *Comité*, the local press and other public figures in relation to the symbolism of both the statue and the public events organised around the *Mwâ Kâ* to mark the 24 September.

One characterisation of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative as representing such a process is clearly linked to the physical erection of the statue, as a symbol of the Kanak people, in the country’s ‘white’/‘European’ capital city. The acceptance of the *Comité*’s project to erect the *Mwâ Kâ* in the capital might, from such a perspective, be identified as a symbol and gesture of ‘*partage*’, and as forming part of a process of mutual recognition, reconciliation and *rééquilibrage* between Kanak and non-Kanak (particularly those of ‘European’ origin) in the country.

⁹⁸ This is discussed in further detail in Annex 13.

⁹⁹ Thus, LI affirmed: ‘pour l’une des toutes premières fois, une place de Nouméa va être dédiée à un symbole kanak. Une petite révolution, une grande évolution dans la capitale calédonienne qui se met, à son rythme, à l’heure de l’Accord de Nouméa. Même si cela ne doit pas faire plaisir à tout le monde.’ PC, ‘Le retour du Mwâ Kâ’, *Les Infos*, no. 103, 10/09/2004, 3.

However, the coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* published by LNC from 2003 to 2005 particularly foregrounds a different (if interrelated) characterisation of the *Comité*'s initiative as being designed to represent and form part of a 'forward-looking' process. In this perspective, the process in question relates to the collective symbolic '*enterrement*' of the country's colonial past or history and a re-orientation towards the construction of a shared future or 'common destiny', inclusive of all of the country's 'citizens'. This process has also been expressly linked to the realisation of the socio-political project elaborated in the Noumea Accord.

Reconciliation through the '*enterrement*' of a divided past and the creation of a united future?

As noted previously, an evaluation of the past and its implications for the present, on the one hand, and a re-orientation towards the future, on the other, were both articulated by Mandaoué as key elements of the *Comité 150 ans après*'s objectives in the lead up to the 150th anniversary of the '*prise de possession*'.¹⁰⁰ A similar, dual process was also identified as being at the heart of the *Comité*'s *Mwâ Kâ* initiative by Moréo-cee in an interview published by LNC on the 23 September 2003.¹⁰¹ In this connection, Moréo-cee represented the initiative as a means of '*[intégrant] ces 150 ans d'histoire dans la dynamique de l'Accord*', and '*[enterrant] ce passé parfois douloureux*'.¹⁰² Moréo-cee's use of the term '*enterrer*' can be seen to link the physical act of erecting or planting (of quite literally placing 'in earth' – '*en-terre*') the *Mwâ Kâ* statue with the symbolism attributed to it by the *Comité 150 ans après* as metaphorically 'burying', or rather 'laying to rest', the colonial past/history. The erection of this symbolic *poteau* was also

¹⁰⁰ See '1853-2003 : une commémoration tournée vers l'avenir', *Les Infos*, no. 41, 04/07/2003, 4; Thierry Squillario, 'Georges Mandaoué : « Le 24 septembre, c'est le début d'un nouveau soleil »', *Les Infos*, no. 52, 19/09/2003, 2. See also 'Georges Mandaoué : « Il serait bon que des initiatives citoyennes se concrétisent »', *Les Infos*, no. 53, 26/09/2003, 4.

¹⁰¹ Xavier Serre, 'Lucienne Moréo-cee, comité 150 ans après : « Un poteau pour enterrer les différences »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 2. This was, moreover, the first article published in the local written press to focus on the *Mwâ Kâ*.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

identified by Moréo-cee as giving effect to the construction of '*la grande case du pays*' of the future, in line with the Noumea Accord project of constructing a 'common destiny'.¹⁰³

In the lead paragraph introducing and discursively framing this interview, LNC itself appropriates Moréo-cee's discourse and emphasises this dual objective of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative. Thus, the newspaper characterises the erection of the statue as being: '*[p]our enterrer une histoire parfois douloureuse. Pour aller vers un destin commun.*'¹⁰⁴ A slightly different formulation appears in the headline of this interview, which runs: '*Lucienne Moréo-cee, comité 150 ans après : « Un poteau pour enterrer les différences »*'.¹⁰⁵ The phrase '*enterrer les différences*' clearly suggests a process of inter-group reconciliation, which is also implicit in Moréo-cee's representation of the aims and meaning of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in this interview. However, the phrase quoted in this headline does not appear in the main text of the interview itself, and has its own particular discursive implications.

On the one hand, this phrase could be interpreted as constructing the *Mwâ Kâ* as a means for various groups to put their present differences in relation to the country's (colonial) past and future 'behind' them. This interpretation appears to have the most congruence with Moréo-cee's own discourse, and that of the *Comité* more generally.

On the other hand, this phrase could be extended to also include the so-called '*enterrement*' of past and present ethno-cultural differences, that is, differences between group identities, with a view to the creation and adoption of a shared (possibly '*métis*') identity in the future. This reading is potentially supported by the fact that the main article published by LNC on the same page as this interview, which is devoted to the 24 September as the 150th anniversary of the '*prise de possession*', focuses on a large local family '*métisée*', which is identified as 'perfectly symbolising' the 'new era' announced

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

by the Noumea Accord and as epitomising the construction of the country's future 'common destiny'.¹⁰⁶ However, as discussed previously, the *Mwâ Kâ* statue can be identified as a strong symbol of Kanak identity and indigeneity, and there is no suggestion in Moréo-cee's discourse in this interview (or in that of other members of the *Comité*) that the differences between ethno-cultural groups and identities can or should be eliminated in the future.

This highlights several tensions within the *Mwâ Kâ* project and the way in which it has been variously constructed in local public discourse since 2003. In particular, it points to the fact that the implications of such a project to 'enterrer' the past are highly dependent on the way in which that past is itself constructed. While Moréo-cee identifies the *Mwâ Kâ* project in this interview as relating to the 'enterrement' of the country's colonial history, the persisting importance and implications of certain aspects of the country's past can nevertheless be seen to be expressed through the *Mwâ Kâ*, particularly given its emphasis on Kanak identity as indigenous. Thus, at the same time as being designed to symbolise the 'enterrement' (therefore representing the 'end point', to some degree or other) of certain 'pasts' and histories, the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative can also be seen to construct other historical narratives in which aspects of the past are constructed as persisting in the present and the future.

This conclusion is also supported by the construction of the signification of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue's carvings by various members of the *Comité 150 ans après* as representing Kanak and/or the country's history through the representation of the eight *aires coutumières*, which are affirmed as legitimate historical and contemporary categories for Kanak people.¹⁰⁷ There is certainly no suggestion that these purportedly historically grounded categories should be 'enterrées' or relegated to the past.

¹⁰⁶ Xavier Serre, '24 septembre 1853 – 24 septembre 2003 : 150 ans d'histoire et un destin commun', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 2. This article is discussed further below.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Adèle Buama in Lurton (2007: 86); Françoise Caillard in Xavier Serre and Ingrid Chanéné, 'Des milliers de bras pour le mwâ kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 2; and unidentified Kanak 'coutumiers' in Ingrid Chanéné, 'Cérémonie aujourd'hui baie de la Moselle', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/09/2003, 6.

Another example illustrating the tensions surrounding the construction of the *Comité*'s intention as being to realise the '*enterrement*' of the past/history through the *Mwâ Kâ* is also apparent in the textual description of the section of the statue's carvings representing the '*pays Djubéa Kaponé*' published by LNC and *Palabre coutumier*. Situated at the top of the statue, just below the carving of the *grande case* at the statue's summit, the carvings of this section are dominated by a seated male figure holding a '*casse-tête*'. These carvings can be seen to implicitly evoke the often violent conflict produced by colonisation and the Kanak armed resistance to colonial domination, an interpretation which is supported by the textual description and 'explanation' of these carvings, according to which the sculptors:

*ont représenté le pays Djubéa Kapone sous la forme d'un vieux guerrier assis, qui attend patiemment depuis 150 ans. S'il a les armes à la main, c'est pour dire qu'il ne les a jamais déposées. Mais ce sont les armes d'une autre époque, d'une histoire qu'on enterre pour en bâtir une nouvelle.*¹⁰⁸

This carefully phrased discursive framing of the signification of this armed warrior at the top of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue can be seen to work to circumvent its possible interpretation as a provocative affirmation of a continued Kanak commitment to armed conflict in its struggle against colonial domination. For, while this description states that the carving of the '*vieux guerrier assis*' armed with weapons is designed to signify the fact that '*il ne les a jamais déposées*' – a strong symbol of the persistence of Kanak resistance – the potential implications of this symbolic reaffirmation of continued Kanak resistance are immediately foreclosed by the assertion that '*ce sont les armes d'une autre époque, d'une histoire qu'on enterre pour en bâtir une nouvelle*'. This assertion effectively works to confine any such armed resistance to the 'past', to 'history'. This passage demonstrates the delicate balance between the construction of

¹⁰⁸ 'Mwâ kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10; 'Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 3 ; 'Signification du MwâKâa' (2007: 89).

both continuities and discontinuities between the ‘past’, the ‘present’ and the ‘future’ in and through the cultural and political event constituted by the *Mwâ Kâ*.

An article published by LNC on the same page as these textual descriptions in September 2003 can be seen to represent the signification of this armed warrior in a slightly different manner, apparently drawing on comments made by Narcisse Decoiré.¹⁰⁹ LNC writes:

[à] l’articulation du dernier de ses anneaux, de ses tranches de vie et de temps, le poteau dit en quelque sorte « au revoir et bonjour ». Le mwâ kâ est ainsi destiné à tous ceux qui se retrouvent dans l’esprit des Accords et du Pays, explique Narcisse Decoiré, le sculpteur de Saint-Louis qui en a supervisé la réalisation. A eux de dire si la petite liane de magnagna, l’igname sauvage des temps de famine, qui s’arrête pour l’instant sur la sagaie du plus haut guerrier, doit en rester là ou continuer à pousser.¹¹⁰

This construction tends to leave open the question as to whether or not the country has moved beyond the period of struggle and armed resistance, and can be seen to place the onus of determining this question on ‘tous ceux qui se retrouvent dans l’esprit des Accords et du Pays’.¹¹¹

As seen previously, LNC broadly appropriates the *Comité 150 ans après*’s discursive construction of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and initiative as symbolising and forming part of a process of simultaneous ‘enterrement’ of the conflictual and divisive past and construction of the shared and unifying future. However, the newspaper tends most often to phrase the first element of this process as affecting the ‘deuil’, rather than the ‘enterrement’, of that past. Thus, in LNC’s main coverage of the 24 September 2003 event organised by the *Comité* around the *Mwâ Kâ*, the newspaper affirms that: ‘la célébration avait un objectif bien précis : faire le deuil d’une histoire souvent

¹⁰⁹ Henri Lepot, ‘Un symbole à déchiffrer de bas en haut’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

douloureuse pour regarder vers l'avenir, pour construire un destin commun.'¹¹² A very similar formulation of the 'objective' of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and related initiatives also appears on numerous occasions in the newspaper's coverage of this subject in 2004 and 2005.¹¹³ The vocabulary of both '*enterrement*' and '*deuil*' clearly evokes the metaphor of human death and the practices and processes surrounding such an event.

LNC's constructions of the *Mwâ Kâ* as being designed to '*faire le deuil*' of the country's colonial past are particularly significant when compared to the previous pro-independence Kanak designation of the 24 September anniversary as a '*jour de deuil*' for the Kanak people.¹¹⁴ For, unlike the recurrent annual pro-Kanak independence '*jour de deuil*', it appears from LNC's coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* published from 2003 to 2005 that the mourning to be symbolised and effected by the so-called '*enterrement*' of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue, as a symbol of the past 150 years of colonial history, was purportedly intended to signify the end of that past, and so the definitive end of the period of (Kanak) mourning – possibly implicitly following the Kanak 'customary' practice of the '*levée de deuil*' – as well as the beginning of the construction of the future, the '*destin commun*' to be shared by all local 'citizens'.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Xavier Serre and Ingrid Chanéné, 'Des milliers de bras pour le mwâ kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 2.

¹¹³ Thus, in February 2004, LNC characterises the *Mwâ Kâ* as, '*un symbole fort*': '[é]rigé le 24 septembre dernier pour commémorer le 150^e anniversaire de la prise de possession de la Nouvelle-Calédonie par la France, l'immense poteau sculpté avait un objectif bien précis : faire le deuil d'une histoire souvent douloureuse pour regarder vers l'avenir, pour construire un destin commun.' 'Gouaro Deva : la polémique enfle – Jacques Lafleur : « J'ai été trompé »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/02/2004, 10. On the 22 September 2005, the newspaper similarly identifies the 'message' of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue as follows: '*faire le deuil d'une histoire souvent douloureuse pour regarder vers l'avenir, pour construire un destin commun.*' 'Deux jours de fête autour du Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/09/2005, 5. The following edition of the newspaper contains an article in which the 'objective' of the *Mwâ Kâ* is stated in identical terms. Xavier Serre, 'Mwâ Kâ : La place du destin commun', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 2.

¹¹⁴ See the discussion in Annex 11.

¹¹⁵ It might also be noted in this connection that Brown cites Jean-Marie Tjibaou as characterising *Mélanésie 2000* itself as having represented the '*levée d'un deuil de 130 ans*', that is, of the past 130 years of French colonisation since 1853: Brown (2008: 542). See also Missotte (1985: 474). The '*levée de deuil*' in Kanak culture signals the lifting of certain 'customary' taboos and restrictions, imposed particularly on a key group of designated mourners, from the moment of the individual's death. Following Tjibaou's analogy, *Mélanésie 2000* would represent the lifting of taboos and restrictions (perhaps particularly in relation to Kanak 'cultural' expression) imposed on Kanak groups subsequent to French

Given the significance of the tensions surrounding the idea of ‘*enterrant*’ or ‘*faisant le deuil*’ of the past/history through the *Mwâ Kâ*, it is important to consider LNC’s construction of the past/history symbolised by the statue. Various members of the *Comité 150 ans après* appear to have identified the *Mwâ Kâ* as symbolising Kanak history/histories and/or the country’s (singular) history, particularly in relation to the colonial period. The same is also true of LNC’s discursive construction of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue as symbolising the past/history in its coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* published in 2003 and subsequently.¹¹⁶

One article published by LNC in September 2003 is especially worth highlighting in this connection. This article expressly draws on and largely appropriates the discourse of the *Comité 150 ans après*, including particularly that of Decoiré. The newspaper writes of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue: ‘[c]hacun de ses étages raconte une histoire, des histoires, l’histoire en fait de la Calédonie, entremêlant mythes fondateurs kanaks et références historiques à la colonisation.’¹¹⁷ Frequent references by LNC in this article to the *Mwâ*

colonisation. Another taboo *Mélanésie 2000* can be seen to have been designed to lift was that surrounding the negative impacts and injustices of the country’s colonisation from the perspective of its first occupants. The lifting of this taboo in relation to the colonial past/history of the country was itself designed to open the way to a radical transformation of the country’s present and future (as indicated in the *jeu scénique*, which itself ended with the resumption and conclusion of a ‘*levée de deuil*’, represented as the means of clearing the path to a fraternal future). Thus, as noted by Brown, through the organisation and realisation of the festival, ‘[a]u-delà du deuil, Tjibaou vise surtout l’avenir’: Brown (2008: 542).

¹¹⁶ For example, in the lead paragraph of the main article published on 25 September 2003 reporting on the 24 September event organised by the *Comité*, the newspaper characterises the *Mwâ Kâ* statue as a ‘*poteau sculpté représentant l’histoire du pays*’, referring to the history of the whole country and in general terms, rather than a specifically or exclusively Kanak history: Xavier Serre and Ingrid Chanéné, ‘Des milliers de bras pour le mwâ kâ’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 2. In December 2003, the paper similarly not only identifies the *Mwâ Kâ* statue as representing the ‘*huit aires coutumières de Nouvelle-Calédonie*’, but also characterises it as a ‘*symbole de l’histoire du territoire*’ as a whole: Charlotte Antoine, ‘Le mwâ kâ sera le mât d’une pirogue tournée vers l’avenir’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/12/2003, 10.

¹¹⁷ Henri Lepot, ‘Un symbole à déchiffrer de bas en haut’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10. Through the equivalence this passage might be interpreted as constructing between specifically Kanak history/histories and the history of New Caledonia in general, LNC might be viewed as affirming the validity of Kanak perspectives, representations and experiences of the country’s history as a whole (including in particular its colonial history), especially given that the *Mwâ Kâ* was sculpted and created by a group of Kanak people. On the other hand, in distinguishing between Kanak foundational ‘*mythes*’ and ‘*références historiques*’ to colonisation, the newspaper could be interpreted as implicitly drawing a distinction between the relative value and validity of Kanak perspectives, cultural references and foundational narratives (as ‘*stories*’ rather than ‘*histories*’ – noting the polysemy of the French term ‘*histoire*’), compared to Western perspectives and Western history (as ‘*true*’, ‘*objective*’ and ‘*verifiable*’).

Kâ as having numerous ‘pages’ which need to be ‘read’ in a certain (linear) order can be seen to emphasise the statue’s symbolic representation of ‘history’, understood in a conventional Western sense. The metaphor of history as a book not only conforms to the traditional, dominant Western conception of history as an ‘objective’ and ‘truthful’ (re)presentation of facts and events (which are primarily sourced in and legitimised by their inscription in the written record) fixed at a particular date or time in the past. This metaphor also conforms to the view of history as a static, linear narrative, capable of being expressed, understood and preserved in authoritative texts. Indeed, this metaphor of history as book also extends beyond representations of history as ‘the past’, to representations of that past in relation to the present and the future, the successive pages of the book corresponding to a particular linear temporal continuum, constructed as leading from the past, to the present, to the future, as is apparent in LNC’s use in this article of the metaphor of history as a book (in the form of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue itself) beginning with the past and ending with the future.¹¹⁸

The same metaphor is also used by LNC in its main article on the 150th anniversary of the ‘*prise de possession*’ published on the 23 September 2003, in which the finalisation of the Noumea Accord is constructed as the pivotal moment in New Caledonia’s history

On the other hand, given the widespread, non-pejorative use in public discourse at this time by prominent local Kanak-run cultural institutions (such as the ADCK/CCT) of the term ‘*mythe*’, drawn from ethnographic discourse, in relation to such foundational narratives and ‘cultural’ or ‘customary’ references, it might be more difficult to establish any negative or pejorative inflection in the newspaper’s appropriation and use of this term, especially in the context of this particular article which can otherwise be seen to valorise Kanak cultural/‘customary’ references, ‘histories’ and perspectives. However, the way in which this particular use of the term ‘*mythe*’ and its distinction from ‘*références historiques*’ might be interpreted and understood by LNC’s various readers remains an open question.

¹¹⁸ LNC writes: ‘[*l*]e *mwâ kâ*, précisent ses concepteurs, se lit de bas en haut, en commençant par les pages invisibles. Car tout commence par la terre et finit dans la terre. Deux mètres du poteau sont ainsi fichés dans le sol. C’est la part des Vieux, celle qui appartient à ceux qui ne sont plus, et qui nous appartiendra aussi à nous, un jour. En revanche, tout en haut, se trouve la part des vivants, celle du futur : la case, là où tout le monde doit se retrouver. Elle est au-dessus des 150 ans qui ont été symboliquement enterrés mercredi [le 24 septembre 2003].’ At the end of this article, the paper characterises the middle section of the statue as itself similarly needing to be ‘read’, although in this instance the signification of the carvings in this section is not explicitly identified as representing the country’s history. LNC writes: ‘[e]ntre la part des Vieux, tout en bas, et la part du futur, tout en haut, des artistes de chacune des huit aires coutumières ont sculpté leur part du pays. À lire, là encore, de bas en haut.’ Henri Lepot, ‘Un symbole à déchiffrer de bas en haut’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10.

signalling the end of the country's conflictual past and the beginning of its consensual future.¹¹⁹ Thus, at the beginning of this article the newspaper identifies the then still unresolved question of the erection of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue in the *Place des Cocotiers* as proof that:

*malgré le temps, la date du 24 septembre reste toujours embarrassante. Véritable deuil pour les uns, fête patriotique pour les autres, elle a d'ailleurs été diversement célébrée au cours de l'histoire [...]. Et le seuil symbolique des 150 ans n'arrange rien à l'affaire... Pourtant la Calédonie a fait bien du chemin depuis le 24 septembre 1853. 150 ans d'histoire, parfois douloureuse, qui ont finalement abouti à la signature de l'Accord de Nouméa et à la construction d'un destin commun. Une nouvelle ère, une nouvelle page [...].*¹²⁰

As noted previously, this article goes on to identify the '*famille Bocahut, originaire de Ouégoa*', as '*un véritable melting pot culturel*' and a '*métissage réussi*', and consequently as 'perfectly symbolising' the Noumea Accord and the country's harmonious '*destin commun*', being an '*exemple parmi d'autres*' and '[s]ans doute l'image du pays de demain.'¹²¹

Significantly, the newspaper suggests that the purportedly 'a-political' nature of this family may be the 'secret' of its unity and harmonious '*joie de vivre que rien ne semble*

¹¹⁹ Xavier Serre, '24 septembre 1853 – 24 septembre 2003 : 150 ans d'histoire et un destin commun', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 2. This might be contrasted to the Noumea Accord's own construction of this pivotal moment as the finalisation of the Matignon Accords agreement. Again mobilising the metaphor of a book as a means of representing the linear progression from the past to the present and the future, the Noumea Accord's Preamble affirms: '[L]es accords de Matignon signés en juin 1988 ont manifesté la volonté des habitants de Nouvelle-Calédonie de tourner la page de la violence et du mépris pour écrire ensemble des pages de paix, de solidarité et de prospérité.' *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*, 'Préambule', point 4. The construction of the signification of the carving of the armed '*vieux guerrier assis*' at the top of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue discussed previously can be seen to echo the discursive confinement of violence and armed struggle to the country's past in this passage of the Noumea Accord's Preamble, and to similarly attribute agency in relation to the determination of the country's future to all of its established inhabitants.

¹²⁰ Xavier Serre, '24 septembre 1853 – 24 septembre 2003 : 150 ans d'histoire et un destin commun', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 2.

¹²¹ Ibid.

*pouvoir troubler. Surtout pas la politique.*¹²² In this article, the country's projected future 'common destiny' is thus represented as being brought about 'naturally' through the biological and cultural '*métissage*' of local identities, rather than through politics or the nature of the country's politico-juridical status and relationship to France. Indeed, this article can be seen to work to both de-legitimise political intervention and change, and to affirm and reinforce the perpetuation of the current status-quo, which is itself identified as 'organically' changing and moving 'naturally' towards the harmonious 'common destiny' (constructed implicitly by the newspaper as the gradual creation of a shared identity '*métisée*') projected by the Noumea Accord. Moreover, the affirmation of a shared, present or future '*métis*' identity in New Caledonia and its construction as a socio-political 'model' for New Caledonia and its future 'common destiny' in this article might be seen to be ultimately geared towards eliminating the specificity claimed collectively by Kanak people attaching to Kanak identity as indigenous, thereby undermining the basis and legitimacy of Kanak people's political claims to sovereignty, independence and any special, privileged status or set of rights.¹²³

Another article published by LNC in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* in September 2004 similarly identifies the formulation of the Noumea Accord's 'common destiny' project as the pivotal turning point in the country's history.¹²⁴ Indeed, in this article the newspaper represents the *Mwâ Kâ* itself as symbolising the end of one period of the country's history (associated with colonisation) and the beginning of another (associated with the Noumea Accord 'common destiny' project).¹²⁵ Thus, LNC identifies the *Mwâ Kâ* as a '*grand poteau sculpté [...] qui marque symboliquement la*

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ See also the discussion of this discursive strategy potentially associated with the construction, affirmation or projection of a shared '*métis*' New Caledonian identity and society in Chapter Two.

¹²⁴ 'Le Mwaka transféré place de la Moselle', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/09/2004, available online only at <<http://www.lnc.nc>> (from the 8 to the 23 September 2004 no printed editions of LNC appear to have been produced due to a strike).

¹²⁵ Ibid.

*fin de la colonisation et le début du destin commun.*¹²⁶ This formulation is particularly striking given its clear acknowledgement of the temporal proximity of colonisation to the present.¹²⁷ LNC can be seen to directly appropriate and support the *Comité 150 ans après*'s own construction of the *Mwâ Kâ*'s meaning in this passage.

This formulation, including particularly its direct reference to '*colonisation*', as well as the newspaper's representation in its coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* from 2003 of the country's colonial past as '*une histoire souvent douloureuse*',¹²⁸ can be contrasted to LNC's tendency identifiable in its 1975 coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* to both discursively occlude the colonial past (particularly in terms of its negative aspects and impacts on the country's original inhabitants) and/or to construct a considerable temporal distance between the colonial past and the present as a means of occluding the perpetuation of certain colonial relations of power in the present, and thereby eliminating any justification for the radical transformation of the established status quo through decolonisation.

The signing of the Noumea Accord, with its direct acknowledgement and explicit (if still partial and strategic) description of this colonial heritage including from the perspective of the country's indigenous population in the Preamble, appears to have gone some way towards both lifting the prevailing local '*non-dits*' and taboos surrounding the treatment of this subject in 'mainstream' public discourse, and towards

¹²⁶ Ibid. Earlier in September 2004, the newspaper also implicitly identified the *Mwâ Kâ* as representing the country's colonial history, stating that: '[c]hacun de ses étages sculptés l'an dernier à Saint-Louis représente une aire du pays et une tranche d'histoire partagée des Kanak et de la France.' This construction can be seen to underline the *Mwâ Kâ*'s symbolic representation of the past 150 years of French colonisation in the country, in relation to which the dominant dynamic is posited as being that between 'the coloniser' (France) and the colonised (the Kanak). This shorthand representation of the colonial dynamic is, however, highly reductive, particularly in relation to the local settler and immigrant populations established in the country and acknowledged and represented as a third group implicated in the Matignon and Noumea Accords. 'Le Mwaka restitué aux coutumiers à quelques jours de son déménagement', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 15/09/2004, available online only at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

¹²⁷ From the perspective of official French nomenclature, the colonial period in New Caledonia officially ended in 1946 when it became a '*Territoire d'Outre-Mer*', four decades before the finalisation of the Noumea Accord and the creation of the *Mwâ Kâ*. Leblic (2003: 300).

¹²⁸ See, for example, Xavier Serre and Ingrid Chanéné, 'Des milliers de bras pour le mwâ kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 25/09/2003, 2; Xavier Serre, 'Lucienne Moréo-cee, comité 150 ans après: « Un poteau pour enterrer les différences »', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 23/09/2003, 2.

the recognition of the validity of Kanak representations of colonisation. However, LNC's 2004 characterisation of the *Mwâ Kâ* as symbolically marking '*la fin de la colonisation et le début du destin commun*'¹²⁹ still situates colonisation firmly in the country's past. In contrast, there is a certain degree of ambiguity in the terms of the Noumea Accord's Preamble which discursively situate colonisation temporally.¹³⁰ As noted previously, there is also some ambiguity apparent in the discursive constructions articulated at various times by different members of the *Comité 150 ans après* of the *Mwâ Kâ* as a means of '*enterrant*' the past and constructing the future.¹³¹

As discussed in Annex 14, the Noumea Accord can be understood as representing and furthering an inherently political process of attempted legitimisation and inter-group reconciliation through the elaboration of specific, historically grounded narratives and the construction of particular continuities and discontinuities between the past, on the one hand, and the present and the future, on the other. This can also be identified as the primary intended function of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and initiative as they were discursively articulated by the *Comité 150 ans après*. However, particularly by reason of the

¹²⁹ 'Le Mwaka transféré place de la Moselle', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/09/2004, available online only at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

¹³⁰ At one point the Preamble affirms that '*[l]e passé a été le temps de la colonisation*', firmly situating the colonial period in the past. At another point, the contemporary process engaged by the Noumea Accord itself is described as a process of '*décolonisation*', implying that colonisation is presently still in the process of being overcome, so that no strict temporal division can be drawn between the 'colonial' and the 'post-colonial' periods. See *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*, 'Préambule', point 4.

¹³¹ For instance, Moréo-cee referred in September 2003 to the '*enterrement*' of the colonial past in terms of the 'integration' of that past '*dans la dynamique de l'Accord*'. Xavier Serre, 'Lucienne Moréo-cee, comité 150 ans après: « Un poteau pour enterrer les différences »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 2. Her use of the verb '*intégrer*' would appear to suggest the continuation of that past, if potentially in a different form, in the present and the future, rather than suggesting any strict separation between the past, on the one hand, and the present and the future, on the other. Moreover, the narratives of historical continuity and Kanak indigeneity identifiable in the *Mwâ Kâ* statue's carvings themselves were not intended to have been symbolically '*enterrés*' through the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative, a process directed rather towards the country's colonial past/history. But very few elements of the statue's carvings explicitly or implicitly represented that colonial past/history and little detailed discussion of it appears from the local written press coverage of the 24 September events organised from 2003 to have been included in the official speeches made by the *Comité 150 ans après* and others on these occasions (although this could simply reflect the editorial decisions of the papers in question). While the *Comité* produced and sold a book comprising a detailed chronology of the country's colonial history as part of the event organised to mark the 24 September 2003 in Noumea (*Comité 150 ans après* (2003)), this does not appear to have been given a large degree of public prominence.

ambiguities in relation to the precise nature of the history to be symbolically '*enterrée*' through the *Mwâ Kâ* project and of the associated demarcation constructed between specific aspects of the past, on the one hand, and the present and the future, on the other, this element of the *Comité*'s discourse is open to different interpretations and appropriations, and can consequently be discursively mobilised in very different ways for very different political ends. This is explored further below in relation to Jacques Lafleur's discourse on the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in 2003.

The participative public events on the 24 September around the *Mwâ Kâ* from 2003

Given the Kanak initiation of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative and the predominantly Kanak symbolism represented by the physical statue itself, the credibility of the *Mwâ Kâ* as an inclusive symbol of grass-roots reconciliation, shared New Caledonian 'citizenship' and a shared commitment to and active realisation of the construction of a 'common destiny' by and for the country's Kanak and non-Kanak communities has been heavily dependent on the inclusion of people representing all of the country's ethno-cultural groups in the events organised around the statue for the commemoration of the 24 September anniversary since 2003. Indeed, a key element of the discursive construction (and either affirmation or contestation) of the *Mwâ Kâ*'s symbolism and legitimacy has been the nature and the popular success (particularly in terms of the involvement of people from the country's non-Kanak communities) of the annual participative public events organised around the *Mwâ Kâ* to mark the anniversary. Consequently, the character and success of these public events can be identified as common and prominent themes in the discourses articulated in the local written press by different members of the *Comité 150 ans après*, by other local public and political figures, and by the local newspapers themselves.

It should be noted in this connection that, in evaluating the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative each year since 2003, the local print media has not only consistently placed particular emphasis on the participation (or otherwise) of representatives of the country's non-Kanak communities, but also on that of politicians representing the main local political formations. However, particularly considering the initial primary objectives and focus

of the *Comité 150 ans après* articulated in 2003 by Moréo-cee – to go beyond the letter to the spirit of the Noumea Accord in directly engaging ‘civil society’ at a grass-roots level in the Noumea Accord process¹³² – the involvement of local political figures would seem to have been relatively insignificant for the success of the event from the perspective of its organisers.

Nevertheless, in 2004, the dramatic alteration of the local political landscape produced by the May provincial elections¹³³ also produced a dramatic increase in the political appropriation of the *Mwâ Kâ* and the active participation in the *Comité*’s 24 September event by numerous local politicians. This shift towards the more direct incorporation of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative into the formal domain of local politics was confirmed by the official adoption of the 24 September *Mwâ Kâ* event by the New Caledonian Government in 2005 as the country’s ‘*journée de la citoyenneté*’. The decisions made in subsequent years by various politicians to participate (or not) in the 24 September event at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* have consequently taken on another layer of political significance, particularly as various aspects of the Noumea Accord (including notably its category of local ‘citizenship’) became increasing prominent and politically contested.

The *Mwâ Kâ* ‘porté par toutes les communautés du Territoire’ in 2003?

According to members of the *Comité 150 ans après* cited in the local press in 2003 and subsequently, their initial intention was for the *Mwâ Kâ* statue, weighing a total of three tons, to be carried through Noumea to the chosen site for its permanent erection (originally designated as the *Place des Cocotiers*) by locals representing all of the

¹³² Recall her representation of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in 2003 as being the *Comité*’s response to the question: ‘[*Les politiques on signé un document en mai 1998, mais nous, la société civile, comment on signe ?*]’ Xavier Serre, ‘Lucienne Moréo-cee, comité 150 ans après: « Un poteau pour enterrer les différences »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 2.

¹³³ See the discussion above.

country's ethno-cultural communities. Thus, according to Moréo-cee in LNC's interview published on the 23 September 2003:

Les Caldoches, les Vietnamiens, les Wallisiens... Toutes les communautés ont été invitées à venir porter ces trois tonnes avec nous. Tous ceux qui se reconnaissent dans la grande case du pays que l'on veut construire. Que ce soit clair : on ne veut pas construire un pays seuls, on veut construire un destin commun !¹³⁴

This shared gesture and physical act was clearly intended to have had particular importance in legitimising the *Mwâ Kâ* statue as plausibly representing a symbol of a shared (Kanak and non-Kanak) grass-roots commitment to and concrete engagement in the Noumea Accord process of forging a 'common destiny', rather than just a symbol of Kanak identity, unity and *revendication*.

In this connection it might also be noted that the choice of involving the general public in the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative through this act of physically carrying the statue to its final resting place could possibly also be understood in reference to certain Kanak 'traditions' which have been identified as surrounding the construction of a *grande case*, particularly in relation to the transportation of the *poteau central*.¹³⁵ More specifically, the *Comité 150 ans après*'s apparent intention to orchestrate the collective transportation and erection of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue could potentially be interpreted as having been designed to evoke certain 'traditional' Kanak processes relating to the origins and establishment of specific communities and their legitimacy, associated with the collective transportation of a *poteau central* and the construction of a *grande case*.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ According to Kasarhérou and Klein: '[L]e transport du poteau central de la grande case est un moment d'exaltation collective : tout au long du chemin, on renouvelle les alliances avec les territoires des clans traversés. L'implantation du poteau sur le tertre donne lieu à une grande cérémonie.' Kasarhérou and Klein (2000a: 28).

¹³⁶ For instance, Boulay links the 'tradition' of sourcing the tree for the *poteau central* at a considerable distance from the site on which the *grande case* is to be erected (as was similarly the case for the *Mwâ Kâ*) to the foundational myths which establish the lineage of the *chef* as descendent from a foreign child discovered in the forest and brought back to the village: Boulay (1990a: 105, 126.) Boulay contends that, in light of these myths, 'on comprend mieux ce qui est rejoué et mis en scène quand on va chercher au loin ce poteau : le chef, comme l'arbre, sont venus de l'extérieur, de la forêt et de la montagne, lieux de

On this analysis, the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative might be understood as having been designed to create a new foundation, a new legitimacy, grounded in the cultural references of ‘the Kanak people’, for the united country projected into the future and encapsulated by the Noumea Accord phrase, ‘*destin commun*’.

However, despite the professed desire of the event’s organisers, the large majority of people who actually participated in carrying the statue in a tour of the streets of the *Baie de la Moselle* and who were in attendance at the event held there on the 24 September were Kanak.

Nevertheless, in its coverage of the 2003 event, LNC foregrounds the (purported) involvement of all of the country’s communities in carrying the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and the symbolism of this gesture. This apparent anomaly can be seen to confirm the broader trend of the daily newspaper’s treatment of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and initiative in 2003, which was overwhelmingly favourable.¹³⁷ In line with the position articulated by the *Comité 150 ans après* and despite the *Mwâ Kâ*’s otherwise seemingly predominant grounding in the cultural references and agency of a particular group – ‘the Kanak people’, or at least certain members and representatives of that group – the newspaper tended initially to represent the *Mwâ Kâ* positively as an inclusive symbol and initiative.¹³⁸

l’origine des clans. Ils sont accueillis par les autres clans qui les installent à leur tête et en font leur grand aîné : intermédiaire entre les gens du hameau et les gens de l’extérieur, entre les vivants et les morts: *ibid.*, 105.

¹³⁷ For instance, the newspaper’s 2003 coverage can be seen to valorise the statue’s artistic qualities, its function as a symbolic gesture representing a shared commitment to the idea of a ‘common destiny’, as well as the statue’s representation of more specifically Kanak perspectives, histories and cultural references. On the other hand, despite the generally uncritical and positive representation and evaluation of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and initiative by LNC in its 2003 coverage, on two occasions the newspaper hints at a certain degree of cynicism in relation to the prospects for, and potential magnitude and significance of, any future celebrations of the 24 September anniversary: see Henri Lepot, ‘Heurs et malheurs d’un jour ambigu’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 4; Gielbé, “Le poteau de l’optimisme”, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/09/2003, 4.

¹³⁸ This is particularly evident in several articles covering the 24 September event published on the following day. For instance, the lead paragraph of the principal article on the anniversary celebrations proclaims: ‘[p]oint fort de la célébration : la présentation du mwâ kâ. Le poteau sculpté représentant l’histoire du pays a été porté par toutes les communautés du Territoire. Un beau symbole.’ LNC then reaffirms at the beginning of this article’s main body of text that the *Mwâ Kâ* was ‘porté à bout de bras

In an interview published on the day after the event, LNC asks Mandaoué (identified as both Secretary-General of the *Comité 150 ans après* and a 'sénateur coutumier') to assess the day's success overall. Mandaoué's appraisal is ultimately positive, despite certain organisational problems, and he states that the *Comité* '*ne peut qu'être satisfait dans la mesure où les gens ont répondu à notre appel.*'¹³⁹ Similar satisfaction is expressed in an interview with Décoiré published in the following edition. LNC also asks in relation to the thousands of people who attended the celebrations '[c]omment cette parole [a] été diffusée à travers le pays'.¹⁴⁰ Décoiré responds:

[L]a parole a été transmise par le biais du Comité « 150 ans après ». Le comité a fait le tour des communes. En fait, la parole a été lancée du nord au sud et aux îles aussi. Et les personnes qui se sont déplacées en nombre, avant-hier, ont bien perçu le message. C'est la population qui a donné sa valeur au mwâ kê, en étant présente à la commémoration.¹⁴¹

par toutes les communautés du Territoire'. Only later in this text is there any acknowledgement of the actual predominance of Kanak participants. Xavier Serre and Ingrid Chanéné, 'Des milliers de bras pour le mwâ kê', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 2. An accompanying article on the opposite page can similarly be seen to foreground the purported participation of New Caledonia's various non-Kanak communities. This article, entitled '*La parole aux communautés*', comprises a set of six paragraphs of direct quotations from six individuals present at the 24 September celebrations who can be identified as belonging to the country's different ethno-cultural communities and who are implicitly presented as a representative sample the event's attendees. Overall, the views in relation to the *Mwâ Kê* initiative expressed by these individuals are positive. The short quotations reproduced as subheadings above each paragraph ('« Une démarche de paix »'; '« Un travail important »'; '« Partager ce moment »'; '« Une bonne idée »'; '« On a dansé avec les autres »'; '« Des paroles d'ouverture »') affirm and foreground the event's purportedly inclusive character. On the other hand, a somewhat more complex picture does emerge from the quotations constituting each paragraph. Xavier Serre and Ingrid Chanéné, '*La parole aux communautés*', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 3. Printed on same page is an interview with Mandaoué in which the newspaper asks directly, '*[L]es différentes communautés du territoire ont-elles porté le mwâ kê ?*' Mandaoué's response evades answering this question while still stressing the importance of the involvement of the different local communities. Xavier Serre and Ingrid Chanéné, 'Georges Mandaoué, sénateur coutumier et secrétaire général du Comité 150 ans après – « Il faut se comprendre les uns et les autres »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 3.

¹³⁹ Xavier Serre and Ingrid Chanéné, 'Georges Mandaoué, sénateur coutumier et secrétaire général du Comité 150 ans après – « Il faut se comprendre les uns et les autres »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 3.

¹⁴⁰ Ingrid Chanéné, 'Narcisse Décoiré, sculpteur de Saint-Louis : « C'est l'harmonie qui a sorti le Vieux »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

The use by both LNC in its question and Decoiré in his response of the term '*parole*' clearly situates this process within a specifically Kanak communicative frame of reference, generally linked to Kanak 'custom'.

Aside from this question and response, very little attention is given in the daily newspaper's coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* in 2003 to the *Comité 150 ans après*'s work promoting its initiative and the public's involvement. For instance, no mention is made in the newspaper to the fact that, according to Maclellan, '[o]n 20 September, CNDPA activists went into the squatter settlements around Noumea, calling on young people to join the events marking the 150th anniversary.'¹⁴² However, this targeting of disadvantaged Kanak youths living quite literally on the margins of '*la cité*' in relation to an event geared towards affirming the right of Kanak people to be present in the heart of the capital city and towards engendering a shared civic commitment to the socio-political process of forging a 'common destiny' inclusive of all ethno-cultural groups into the future, might be seen to lend even more meaning to the event. This aspect of the organisation of the *Comité*'s commemoration of the 150th anniversary of French colonisation might, indeed, be seen to aim at addressing very real contemporary issues surrounding increasing Kanak urbanisation and alienation. The fact that this targeting of Kanak youths from Noumean squats is not mentioned in the country's only daily newspaper might be seen as yet another manifestation of the continued marginalisation of these disadvantaged Kanak people and, indeed, of their general occlusion from 'mainstream' local public consciousness.

Moreover, when compared to LNC's coverage of the event organised in the Northern Province commune of Pouébo to mark the 24 September 2003 anniversary, the daily's coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative appears overall to somewhat downplay its 'customary' inscription. This is despite the fact that LNC reported briefly on the 'customary' exchanges that had taken place between the *Comité 150 ans après*/CNDPA and the relevant 'customary' and political authorities in the Pouébo region and the '*aire*

¹⁴² Maclellan (2005: 7).

Hoot ma waap' more broadly in relation to these two events in Pouébo and Noumea,¹⁴³ and the newspaper's discussion of these events as having been organised '*en parallèle*' and in the same spirit.¹⁴⁴

Considerable prominence is given to the place of '*la coutume*' in the Pouébo event as it is covered by LNC, and this commemoration is framed by the newspaper as being a predominantly (even potentially an exclusively) Kanak event.¹⁴⁵ The comparative lack of discussion of the 'customary' ceremonies held as part of the 24 September 2003 event organised around the *Mwâ Kâ* could conversely be understood as a discursive strategy supporting the paper's overall representation of the *Mwâ Kâ* event as being consensual and inclusive, and involving the participation of locals of all ethno-cultural groups, rather than as exclusively Kanak.

It is also significant that the newspaper's coverage of the Pouébo commemoration includes a reference to the recent, three-way violent conflict between two rival Kanak groups and the local population of Wallisian families in Saint-Louis, near Noumea.¹⁴⁶ This conflict is referred to indirectly by the newspaper through its report on the speech pronounced during the commemoration by Scolastique Boiguivie, as follows:

¹⁴³ Xavier Serre, '24 septembre 1853 – 24 septembre 2003 : 150 ans d'histoire et un destin commun', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 2; 'Pouébo – 24 septembre : journée de recueillement et d'échanges', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 24; SJ, 'Pouébo – 24 Septembre : rassemblés par l'histoire', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 30.

¹⁴⁴ 'Pouébo – 24 septembre : journée de recueillement et d'échanges', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 24; SJ, 'Pouébo – 24 Septembre : rassemblés par l'histoire', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 30.

¹⁴⁵ The newspaper's references to the Kanak 'customary' ceremonies held as part of the Pouébo event, along with its repeated references to the '*coutumiers*' involved and to the relevant geographical area as the '*aire Hoot ma waap*', in addition to the accompanying photographs which show exclusively Kanak participants, can be identified as a means of conveying and foregrounding its Kanak character. 'Pouébo – 24 septembre : journée de recueillement et d'échanges', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 24; SJ, 'Pouébo – 24 Septembre : rassemblés par l'histoire', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 30.

¹⁴⁶ SJ, 'Pouébo – 24 Septembre : rassemblés par l'histoire', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 30. See the discussion of this conflict in Annex 11.

« [e]st-ce que nous avons suffisamment confiance en nous pour construire le pays avec les autres communautés ? » a-t-elle encore interrogé, évoquant les récents conflits à Saint-Louis.¹⁴⁷

In the broader context of this article, which emphasises the discursive inscription of the Pouébo event by its participants in 'l'esprit de l'Accord de Nouméa',¹⁴⁸ the Saint-Louis conflict is evoked here as potentially representing a broader problem in relation to the Noumea Accord project of forging a 'common destiny'.

This is the only point in LNC's coverage of the 24 September 2003 in which any mention is made of the Saint-Louis conflict, despite the fact that only a week before the anniversary, this conflict and the forced government relocation of the last Wallisian families from the area had been front-page news.¹⁴⁹ The absence of any other discussion of or reference to the Saint-Louis conflict is even more striking in relation to the *Mwā Kā* project itself, given that the sculpture was actually created in Saint-Louis¹⁵⁰ during the most recent period of conflict and in an atmosphere of extreme tension.¹⁵¹ However,

¹⁴⁷ SJ, 'Pouébo – 24 Septembre : rassemblés par l'histoire', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/09/2003, 30. Boiguivie is identified as a descendant of the 'grand chef de Balade, Filipo Bouéone, fusillé dans les débuts de la colonisation'.

¹⁴⁸ To take one example, the Mayor of Pouébo, Joseph Pada, is quoted as having stated during the event: '[u]n peuple qui n'a pas d'histoire, qui n'a pas de mémoire, est un peuple mort. Aujourd'hui, l'histoire est un patrimoine commun, dans cette nouvelle ère ouverte par l'Accord de Nouméa.' SJ, 'Pouébo – 24 Septembre : rassemblés par l'histoire', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/09/2003, 30.

¹⁴⁹ See, for example, Philippe Frédière and Marchel Le Pêchoux, 'Saint-Louis : départ des derniers Wallisiens', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 16/09/2003, 1-4.

¹⁵⁰ As noted previously, the creation and carving of the *Mwā Kā* was supervised and overseen by Narcisse Decoiré who lives in Saint-Louis and whose small-scale construction company, *Bretea*, is based in Saint-Louis. Leaila Adjoui, 'Bretea, ou le succès d'une entreprise de tribu', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 02/05/2009, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

¹⁵¹ It might be noted that several dates and events in relation to the recent outbreaks of violent conflict in Saint-Louis appear in the final pages of the book produced by the *Comité 150 ans après* and sold as part of the 24 September 2003 *Mwā Kā* event. Indeed, despite the title of this book, *Temps et mémoires du pays Kanak : Du malentendu originel à la communauté de destin*, and despite the reproduction on its back cover of a photograph of Lionel Jospin shaking hands with Roch Wamytan and Jacques Lafleur captioned 'Accord de Nouméa, 5 mai 1998', the last date in its chronology does not reflect the realisation of any such harmonious 'common destiny', but relates rather to the Saint-Louis conflict. This can be seen to highlight the salience of the Saint-Louis conflict at the time in which the *Mwā Kā* initiative was being prepared. The chronology particularly emphasises the impact of the conflict on the Kanak communities (including the deaths of two young Kanak men), rather than on the Wallisian community. Moreover, a tendency can be identified in this chronology to downplay any historical means of potentially legitimising

no questions are raised by LNC or reported therein in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ*'s purported symbolism of a shared commitment to the country's 'common destiny' in light of this serious conflict between different groups, both Kanak and Wallisian, who had been living in the same area for some time. This silence can be seen to further confirm the daily newspaper's generally uncritical and highly positive representation and coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in 2003.

While Philippe Gomès referred to the Saint-Louis conflict in his speech delivered at the event organised in La Foa to mark the 24 September anniversary in 2003 and the full text of this speech was reproduced by LI,¹⁵² this weekly newspaper does not itself raise Saint-Louis in its coverage of the anniversary and associated events, including that organised around the *Mwâ Kâ*.

Two years after the relocation of the last Wallisian families from Saint-Louis, two references to the Saint-Louis conflict appear in the coverage of the 24 September 2005 *Mwâ Kâ* event published by LNC and LI. One of these references appears in a section of LNC's main coverage of the event published on the 26 September 2005, entitled '*Ils étaient là...*' and featuring six paragraph-long quotations from members of the general public in relation to the event.¹⁵³ One of these quotations is attributed to '*Nicolas*', identified as a '*Européen depuis trente ans sur le territoire*'.¹⁵⁴ In explaining his refusal to attend the *Mwâ Kâ* event, Nicolas refers to '[I] *expulsion des Wallisiens de l'Ave Maria*', along with '*la défense d'une notion très restrictive de l'emploi local*', as being

the installation of Polynesian communities in New Caledonia. See Comité 150 ans après (2003). Roch Wamytan, who is identified as one of the two Chairs of the *Comité 150 ans après*'s '*Commission d'histoire*' which produced this book, was himself directly implicated in the Saint-Louis conflict as a legally recognised Kanak '*chef*' of Saint-Louis, representing one of the groups claiming 'customary' authority over the area. While LNC included a short article noting the publication of this book by the *Comité 150 ans après* and affirming that it '*met évidemment l'accent sur les souffrances endurées par le peuple kanak*', the newspaper does not discuss this chronology's treatment of the Saint-Louis conflict: Xavier Serre, 'Repères - 150 ans après : le livre', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 3.

¹⁵² '« Vouloir vivre ensemble »', *Les Infos*, no. 54, 03/10/2003, 2. This event is discussed in Annex 10.

¹⁵³ Anne Gaignaire, 'Ils étaient là...', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 10.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

*‘autant de signes d’un repli des Calédoniens sur eux-mêmes et non pas d’ouverture.’*¹⁵⁵

However, Nicolas does not appear to adopt a position in opposition to the *Mwâ Kâ* project itself, but maintains rather that *‘ce qu’il symbolise est loin d’être une réalité.’*¹⁵⁶

The second reference to the Saint-Louis conflict in 2005 appears in an article published by LI on the 30 September, which is signed by Damien Racz, who identifies himself as a *‘Citoyen calédonien’*.¹⁵⁷ Racz acknowledges that some Kanak and ‘Europeans’ alike still *‘refusent le geste’* and the *‘message de paix’* which he views as being expressed and embodied in the *Mwâ Kâ* and associated events, but goes on to affirm that *‘tout le monde’*, regardless of their ethnicity,

*aspire à un Pays meilleur où toutes les communautés cohabiteraient dans l’harmonie et la bonne humeur. Et refuser ce geste [du Mwâ Kâ] pourrait être l’un des meilleurs moyens pour légitimer les mille et un motifs pour que la poudre parle à nouveau, comme en 1984, 1986, 1988 ou même récemment, en 2003, à Saint-Louis.*¹⁵⁸

This reference to Saint-Louis, as in the case of the reference made by Nicolas and appearing in LNC’s coverage, is directed at highlighting the potential problems faced by New Caledonia as it tries to construct and actually realise a peaceful and inclusive future for all of the country’s inhabitants. As in 2003, when Saint-Louis was similarly referred to indirectly in LNC’s coverage of the commemorations held on the 24 September in Pouébo, the Saint-Louis conflict is not raised in either of these two instances in 2005 as a means of criticising or questioning the real nature of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative beyond its construction in the discourse of its organisers and proponents, and the possible motivations behind it.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Damien Racz, ‘Refuser la main tendue ce 24 septembre 2005 est une excellente solution pour relancer la guerre’, *Les Infos*, no. 156, 30/09/2005, 2.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

One week after the 24 September 2003, both LNC and the *Comité 150 ans après* appear more willing to acknowledge the predominance of the Kanak involvement and implication in the celebrations organised around the *Mwâ Kâ*. This shift is particularly apparent in an article reporting on the *Comité*'s '*bilan de la journée de mobilisation*', in interview format.¹⁵⁹ In relation to the question of non-Kanak participation on the 24 September 2003, the paper asks the *Comité* directly: '*[L]es milliers de personnes qui ont participé à la journée du 24 septembre étaient majoritairement Kanak. Ne regrettez-vous pas l'absence des autres communautés ?*'¹⁶⁰ Raphaël Mapou is cited as giving the following response:

*[c]'est vrai que nous sommes un peu déçus mais ce n'est qu'un début. Avec le Mwâ Kâ s'ouvre une nouvelle période pour toutes les communautés du pays. De notre côté, nous considérons avoir joué notre rôle. Nous avons été le poteau central de la nouvelle citoyenneté. Et ce avec générosité, sincérité, sans aucun calcul. Le Mwâ Kâ a été apporté par le peuple kanak, il restera notre œuvre, mais il a été offert à l'ensemble des citoyens du pays. C'est à eux, aujourd'hui, de se l'approprier.*¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Xavier Serre, 'Comité «150 ans après»: «Le Mwâ Kâ est vivant ! »', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 03/10/2003, 6. Note that an interview dealing with the *Comité 150 ans après*'s '*bilan*' of its 24 September 2003 event, which also raises the absence of the country's non-Kanak communities, was published by LI in mid-October. While Mandaoué is quoted in this interview as affirming the overall *bilan* of the event as positive, he nevertheless acknowledges that: '*on a considéré qu'il manquait d'autres communautés pas suffisamment représentées pour atteindre les objectifs qu'on s'était fixés*'. However, Mandaoué defends the actions of the *Comité*, affirming that: '*[d]ans notre démarche, on a sollicité tout le monde. Quand on est allé dans les communes, voir les mairies, c'était bien pour partager le projet avec les gens, les sensibiliser. Pour faire en sorte que les gens se lèvent et viennent. Idem pour les autres communautés, on leur a présenté le projet de la même manière. Après, les gens viennent ou ne viennent pas, ce n'est pas de notre ressort. [...] Je ne peux pas penser à la place des gens. C'est un regret, mais les gens ont leur propre raison. Peut-être que le message n'est pas bien passé chez eux, qu'il y a encore des réticences envers les Kanak.*' In the lead paragraph introducing and framing this interview, LI itself also emphasises the '*absence notable des autres communautés*'. '« L'invité du jeudi », en partenariat avec Radio Djido – Georges Mandaoué: « Je ne peux pas penser à la place des gens »', *Les Infos*, no. 55, 10/10/2003, 4.

¹⁶⁰ Xavier Serre, 'Comité «150 ans après»: «Le Mwâ Kâ est vivant ! »', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 03/10/2003, 6.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. Part of this response is reinforced elsewhere in this article, appearing in a slightly modified form ('*Le Mwâ Kâ a été apporté par le peuple kanak mais il a été offert à tous ceux qui souhaitent partager un destin commun*') as the caption to an accompanying photograph depicting the *Mwâ Kâ* statue being carried through the streets of Noumea. Lucienne Moréo-see is also cited as responding in similar terms to

Mapou's assertion that '*nous*' (which appears implicitly to extend here beyond the members of the *Comité* to encompass the Kanak people as a whole) '*avons été le poteau central de la nouvelle citoyenneté*' is particularly significant. In contrast to the previous representations by the *Comité* of the *Mwâ Kâ* as symbolising the *poteau central* of the metaphorical *grande case* of the 'common destiny' and the category of local 'citizenship', Mapou explicitly identifies the Kanak people with the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and the metaphorical *poteau central* of the *grande case* representing the broader and inclusive category of local 'citizenship'. Mapou thus places the Kanak people at the very heart of the nature, elaboration and development of the central Noumea Accord category of local 'citizenship'.

LNC's acknowledgement in its question to the *Comité* of the relative absence of local non-Kanak people at the 24 September event organised around the *Mwâ Kâ* can be seen to echo its construction of that event as effectively primarily Kanak in character in an article published around the same time reporting on another event organised in Noumea to mark the anniversary: the launch of an exhibition at the *Musée de la Ville de Nouméa* entitled '*150 ans de mémoire collective calédonienne*'.¹⁶² The main article in the two-page feature published by the newspaper on this exhibition opens with two lead dot-points which directly contrast the exhibition and the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative.¹⁶³ These two sentences run:

[b]aie de la Moselle, c'est dans le grain du bois, par la sculpture du mwâ ka, à la manière kanak en somme, que les aires coutumières ont témoigné du cent-cinquantenaire de la prise de possession. Au musée de

this question as follows: '*[I]a première des conclusions à tirer de cette journée, c'est que le travail n'est pas terminé. Le Mwâ Kâ interpelle tout le monde, chaque Kanak, chaque Calédonien, à poursuivre la réflexion là où il est pour participer à la dynamique de construction du pays.*' This conclusion by Moréocée is also reiterated in the lead paragraph of this article, in which LNC states that, according to the *Comité*, '*le Mwâ Kâ a aujourd'hui un rôle important à jouer. Du haut de ses douze mètres, il appelle chaque citoyen à participer à la construction du pays.*'

¹⁶² See Musée de la Ville de Nouméa (2003). Note that this exhibition launch and the various other events held throughout the archipelago to mark the 24 September anniversary in 2003 are discussed in Annex 10.

¹⁶³ Henri Lepot, '150 ans de mémoire collective calédonienne', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/10/2003, 2.

*la Ville, c'est par le texte, l'image et même le film, à la manière européenne en somme, qu'une exposition baptisée « 150 ans de mémoire collective calédonienne » témoignera [...] des quinze décennies qui ont suivi le rattachement de la Calédonie à la France.*¹⁶⁴

Not only does this explicitly construct a distinction and draw a direct contrast between the posited 'Kanak' and 'European' 'manners' of 'bearing witness' to this anniversary (and, indeed, between the concrete media used to do so), but it characterises the anniversary itself differently in each case, as either the '*prise de possession*' or the '*rattachement de la Calédonie à la France*'.

These two lead sentences can be seen to articulate and reinforce certain highly problematic assumptions regarding the most 'natural' and 'authentic' techniques and means of expression open to and used by Kanak people as opposed to 'Europeans' (or people of 'European' origin), 'modern'/'Western' techniques and media being exclusively associated with the latter group. Moreover, LNC effectively distinguishes between the two events as Kanak or 'European' in nature and suggests the different character of their respective political inscription and orientations. This differentiation can be contrasted to this newspaper's earlier predominant constructions of the *Mwâ Kâ* event in 2003 as being broadly consensual and inclusive of all of the country's different ethno-cultural groups, and of the statue itself as symbolising the country's shared past, as well as its shared future in an inclusive 'common destiny'.

Another article forming part of LNC's coverage of this exhibition is also worth noting for its uncharacteristically self-reflexive discussion of collective memory and collective forgetting in the contemporary New Caledonian context. This short article, entitled '*Le subtil équilibre du travail de mémoire*', opens by stating:

[L]'expérience des années passées montre que la commémoration du 24 septembre 1853 peut prendre des tournures différentes, selon qu'elle est perçue comme l'anniversaire d'un « rattachement » porteur de progrès

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

*ou d'une « colonisation » aliénante. Ce sont là des mots censés appartenir au vocabulaire d'un passé révolu. N'empêche. L'arrière-plan politique est fort, l'anniversaire ambigu, sa célébration délicate dès lors qu'il ne faut blesser personne dans une société où les antagonistes d'hier sont en quête du destin commun de demain.*¹⁶⁵

Towards its conclusion this article goes on to discuss the changing taboo subjects in relation to New Caledonia's past (characterised as '*trous*' in collective memory) – previously having been '*le Bagne*' and now the '*temps des événements*'.¹⁶⁶ The article ultimately argues for the value and necessity of both remembering and forgetting, concluding with the affirmation that: '*même si la mémoire est un devoir, l'oubli a aussi ses vertus salvatrices*'.¹⁶⁷ This same argument and perspective might also be used to explain the overall approach taken by this newspaper in relation to its coverage of the 24 September anniversary and the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in 2003, particularly given its acknowledgement of the significant political strategies behind the mobilisation of particular configurations of selective remembering and forgetting in public discourse in New Caledonia.

In contrast to the coverage published by LNC, the coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* event in 2003 published by both LI and LCB acknowledges from the outset the overwhelming predominance of Kanak participation and involvement in the event compared to the country's other communities. For example, one of the few pieces published by LCB on the *Mwâ Kâ*¹⁶⁸ highlights the disparity between the apparently universal support for the social and political idea (or ideal) of the '*destin commun*', on the one hand, and the patent realities of entrenched social and political divisions and antagonism in New

¹⁶⁵ 'Le subtil équilibre du travail de mémoire', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/10/2003, 3.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ The *Mwâ Kâ* initiative receives very little attention in LCB. Similar to its coverage of the CCT's 1998 inauguration, the coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* published by this satirical paper between 2003 and 2005 (subsequent to 2005, the *Mwâ Kâ* all but disappears from LCB's pages) predominantly appears in short articles, generally one paragraph in length, and a number of satirical cartoons. Some short pieces on the *Mwâ Kâ* also appear in the '*Courrier d'électeurs*' rubric.

Caledonia, on the other.¹⁶⁹ The text of this piece runs succinctly: ‘[t]out le monde célèbre le destin commun, mais... chacun de son côté. Les Noirs étaient baïe de la Moselle pendant que les Blancs étaient au salon nautique sur les quais.’¹⁷⁰

The lead paragraph of LI’s main article covering the *Mwâ Kâ* event in 2003 opens with the affirmation that: ‘[l]a commémoration du 24 septembre organisée baïe de la Moselle laisse un sacré goût inachevé.’¹⁷¹ Two key reasons for this are identified: the posited fact that ‘seuls les citoyens kanaks ont répondu en masse à cette manifestation’, and that ‘le fameux poteau qui doit attacher la parole est loin d’avoir trouvé [sic] le bon endroit pour planter ses racines.’¹⁷² In this lead paragraph, as in the main body of this article’s text, LI can be seen to appropriate the *Comité 150 ans après*’s construction of the intended meaning and purpose of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative.¹⁷³ However, in contrast to LNC’s contemporaneous positive evaluation of the event, LI’s coverage paints a considerably more ambivalent and at times negative picture. Thus, according to LI:

[l]e nouveau soleil prodigué par Georges Mandaoué n’a donc pas vraiment brillé pour tout le monde. [...] [C]e sont essentiellement des kanaks qui ont profité de l’occasion pour démontrer qu’ils pouvaient se rassembler autour de ces thèmes porteurs. [...] Dans l’autre camp, à quelques rares exceptions, les Européens ont eu visiblement peur d’attraper des coups de soleil. Il faut dire que pour eux, cette citoyenneté calédonienne n’est peut-être pas une priorité. Il est également bon de

¹⁶⁹ ‘Destin commun... chacun de son côté’, *Le Chien bleu*, no. 62, October 2003, 1.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Thierry Squillario, ‘Pieds et poings liés au poteau’, *Les Infos*, no. 53, 26/09/2003, 2.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ The statue itself is also valorised, being referred to as ‘cette magnifique sculpture’: ibid. An example of appropriation can be identified in LI’s use of the phrase, ‘poteau qui doit attacher la parole’, in the lead paragraph, which can be seen to directly appropriate Mandaoué’s discourse as articulated in an interview published elsewhere in this same edition of LI, in which he identifies one of the significations of the *Mwâ Kâ* poteau as being: ‘de dire qu’on va attacher ensemble une parole, entre nous tous, et cette parole-là, on va l’utiser tous les jours pour la faire fructifier.’ ‘« L’invité du jeudi », en partenariat avec Radio Djido – Georges Mandaoué: « Il serait bon que des initiatives citoyennes se concrétisent » ; Jerry Delathière: « Le courage, c’est d’assumer l’Accord de Nouméa »’, *Les Infos*, no. 53, 26/09/2003, 4.

*rappeler que rien est [sic] fait pour les sensibiliser sur ces thèmes essentiels de l'Accord de Nouméa.*¹⁷⁴

This perspective is further reinforced in the editorial published in the same edition, which articulates a very similar critical commentary.¹⁷⁵

Moreover, in its 2003 coverage, LI's criticism is not limited to the local non-Kanak population for their purported collective 'failure' to attend and participate in the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative.¹⁷⁶ LI is also particularly critical of the role and actions of Lafleur and Frogier in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* and the broader problems the paper identifies as existing within the local socio-political context, associated with the local non-Kanak community's posited persisting ignorance of and lack of investment in the Noumea Accord process.¹⁷⁷

This critique of Lafleur and Frogier's position regarding, and interaction with, the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in 2003 is entirely absent from the coverage published by LNC. Rather, as in the case of the RPCR's weekly publication, LNH, LNC's uncritical coverage of Lafleur and Frogier's discourse in relation to the initiative can be seen to provide an additional forum for their political appropriation of the *Mwâ Kâ*.

¹⁷⁴ Thierry Squillario, 'Pieds et poings liés au poteau', *Les Infos*, no. 53, 26/09/2003, 2. Reference in this passage is clearly made to the interview with Mandaoué published in the previous edition of the LI, in which Mandaoué is quoted as stating that, '*le 24 septembre pour nous, c'est le début d'un nouveau soleil, une ouverture vers l'avenir*', a formulation which also appears in the headline of that interview: Thierry Squillario, 'Georges Mandaoué : « Le 24 septembre, c'est le début d'un nouveau soleil »', *Les Infos*, no. 52, 19/09/2003, 2.

¹⁷⁵ See Thierry Squillario, 'Editorial : Accord et signes à terre', *Les Infos*, no. 53, 26/09/2003, 2.

¹⁷⁶ This failure is identified by LI as a reflection of their overall lack of genuine engagement with and in the Noumea Accord process and its key category of 'citizenship'. Thierry Squillario, 'Pieds et poings liés au poteau', *Les Infos*, no. 53, 26/09/2003, 2; Thierry Squillario, 'Editorial : Accord et signes à terre', *Les Infos*, no. 53, 26/09/2003, 2.

¹⁷⁷ Thierry Squillario, 'Pieds et poings liés au poteau', *Les Infos*, no. 53, 26/09/2003, 2; Thierry Squillario, 'Editorial : Accord et signes à terre', *Les Infos*, no. 53, 26/09/2003, 2.

Lafleur and Frogier's appropriation of the *Mwâ Kâ* in 2003

From the 2003 coverage published by LNC, it appears that the initial involvement of Lafleur (who was still the single most powerful political figure in New Caledonia at the time) and Frogier (Lafleur's second in command and designated successor) in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative arose as a result of the difficulties experienced by the *Comité 150 ans après* in obtaining permission to erect the statue in the *Place des Cocotiers*. Lafleur's particular discursive (re)construction of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative is readily apparent from one of the first articles published by the daily newspaper on this subject.¹⁷⁸ This article reports on a press conference held by Lafleur, Frogier and Lèques in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* and the question of its (temporary and/or definitive) placement. The newspaper states that Lafleur:

*s'est dit sensible à l'initiative du comité de vouloir ériger une sorte de monument symbole qui marquerait, à l'occasion du cent cinquantième anniversaire du rattachement de la Calédonie à la France, l'attachement kanak à l'Accord de Nouméa et à l'idée du destin commun. « L'idée est en soi généreuse », a affirmé le président de la Province [...].*¹⁷⁹

Lafleur can thus be seen to discursively construct the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative as having an exclusively Kanak-centred meaning and significance.¹⁸⁰

Moreover, Lafleur's offer to the *Comité* of the premises of the Southern Province as a temporary or permanent place of so-called 'asylum'¹⁸¹ for the *Mwâ Kâ* statue can be readily interpreted as a politically motivated gesture designed to further Lafleur's own political ends. As a demonstration of his purported magnanimity, Lafleur's offer can be seen to implicitly affirm his pre-eminence and power. Indeed, Lafleur appears to have

¹⁷⁸ Ingrid Chanéné, 'La Province offre sa cour au poteau du 150e', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/09/2003, 6.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. Lafleur's adherence to an anti-independence stance is reflected by the use of the phrase '*rattachement de la Calédonie à la France*'.

¹⁸⁰ Note particularly his construction of the *Mwâ Kâ* as a '*monument symbole*' marking '*l'attachement kanak à l'Accord de Nouméa et à l'idée du destin commun*.' Emphasis added, *ibid*.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

identified himself as having a responsibility, as the (so-called) '*chef*' of the Southern Province, to help the *Comité* realise its project.¹⁸² In this manner, Lafleur can be seen to discursively affirm his own role and position as the legitimate authority over the Southern region of the *Grande Terre*, above any other political or, indeed, Kanak 'customary' authorities.

As seen above, this offer was ultimately accepted by the *Comité 150 ans après* as a temporary solution to the otherwise intractable problem of the statue's permanent placement. The resulting instalment of the statue within the parameter of the Southern Province building's security fence not only effected Lafleur's physical appropriation of the *Mwâ Kâ*, but can also be seen to symbolise and reflect his discursive and political appropriation of the initiative at the time.

Prior to the collective carrying of the statue and its instalment on the premises of the Southern Province's headquarters, Lafleur and Frogier also made a purportedly 'impromptu',¹⁸³ appearance at the *Baie de la Moselle* celebrations on the 24 September, which was reported on by LNC and LNH.¹⁸⁴ According to LNH's full-page account of this visit (which represents the only real coverage of the 24 September 2003 *Mwâ Kâ* event published by this paper),¹⁸⁵ Frogier delivered a well-prepared discourse '*au nom de Jacques Lafleur, signature des accords de Matignon et de Nouméa, et du Rassemblement*', as part of the program of formal speeches on the day, and Lafleur

¹⁸² '24 septembre : rattachement de la Calédonie à la France. Commémorer ensemble', *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 810, 25/09/2003–01/10/2003, 8.

¹⁸³ Xavier Serre and Ingrid Chanéné, 'Commémorer le 26 juin ?', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 2.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.; '24 septembre : rattachement de la Calédonie à la France. Commémorer ensemble', *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 810, 25/09–01/10/2003, 8.

¹⁸⁵ Moreover, this article is not signalled as a major news story on the front page of the paper and the *Mwâ Kâ* itself is not referred to in this article's headline ('24 septembre : rattachement de la Calédonie à la France – Commémorer ensemble') or sub-heading ('LA POIGNÉE DE MAIN DU 26 JUIN – L'ACTE FONDATEUR').

appears to have spoken and participated in a ‘customary’ ceremony around the *Mwâ Kâ*.¹⁸⁶

The first sentence of the article published by LNC reporting on this visit affirms that the ‘*symbole [du Mwâ Kâ] a été compris par le Rassemblement*.’¹⁸⁷ The selected direct quotations from Lafleur reproduced by LNC in this article¹⁸⁸ affirm Lafleur’s positive evaluation of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative without including any elements of his particular discursive (re)construction of its significance evident in quotations reproduced in earlier and later articles published by this newspaper,¹⁸⁹ and in the more extensive quotations from Lafleur’s public discourse during this ‘impromptu’ visit to the *Baie de la Moselle* reproduced by LNH.¹⁹⁰

In LNH’s coverage of the 24 September event focused on Lafleur and Frogier, ‘[à] l’heure de la coutume’, Lafleur is reported as having characterised the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative as ‘*un geste généreux qui permet l’association de tous*’.¹⁹¹ Lafleur is directly quoted by the paper as having stated:

¹⁸⁶ ‘24 septembre : rattachement de la Calédonie à la France. Commémorer ensemble’, *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 810, 25/09–01/10/2003, 8.

¹⁸⁷ This statement is further affirmed in the caption to the accompanying photograph depicting Lafleur shaking the hands of an unidentified group of Kanak men, which runs: ‘[L]e message du *mwâ kâ* a été compris par le Rassemblement.’ Xavier Serre and Ingrid Chanéné, ‘Commémorer le 26 juin ?’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 2.

¹⁸⁸ These quotations run as follows: ‘« Vous accomplissez un geste historique [...]. C’est une idée généreuse qui fait progresser la Nouvelle-Calédonie. J’accepte ce chemin avec joie et enthousiasme. C’est formidable de partir ainsi ensemble, la main dans la main. »’ The same part of Lafleur’s speech is reproduced somewhat differently in the coverage of LNH: ‘“[j]’accepte le chemin que vous avez tracé avec joie et avec enthousiasme, parce que c’est un progrès formidable de partir tous ensemble, la main dans la main, vers l’avenir de ce pays.”’ ‘24 septembre : rattachement de la Calédonie à la France. Commémorer ensemble’, *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 810, 25/09–01/10/2003, 8.

¹⁸⁹ See Ingrid Chanéné, ‘La Province offre sa cour au poteau du 150e’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/09/2003, 6; Charlotte Antoine, ‘Le *mwâ kâ* sera le mât d’une pirogue tournée vers l’avenir’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/12/2003, 10.

¹⁹⁰ ‘24 septembre : rattachement de la Calédonie à la France. Commémorer ensemble’, *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 810, 25/09–01/10/2003, 8. See the following discussion.

¹⁹¹ ‘24 septembre : rattachement de la Calédonie à la France. Commémorer ensemble’, *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 810, 25/09–01/10/2003, 8.

[j]e crois [...] que cela traduit la volonté de concrétiser l'Accord de Nouméa et de construire l'avenir pour les jeunes. Ils [the Kanak community] ont le droit d'avoir un monument qui rappelle leur histoire [Kanak history] qui parfois a été douloureuse et parfois été heureuse. C'est quelque chose de plus dans le patrimoine de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.¹⁹²

In this passage, Lafleur clearly discursively confines the specific symbolism of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue to the exclusive representation of 'Kanak history'. Moreover, his implicit characterisation of 'Kanak history' as merely an (apparently inessential and relatively peripheral) 'addition' to the country's heritage is clearly profoundly at odds with both the project of the *Comité 150 ans après*¹⁹³ and the central position accorded to Kanak identity (itself intimately intertwined with the history of the Kanak people) in the Noumea Accord and its Preamble. Lafleur's discourse articulated on this occasion can again be seen to reduce Kanak people and their history to a position of equality with the country's other ethno-cultural groups and their respective histories, neutralising the potential political implications of Kanak indigeneity.

In December 2003, both LNC and LNH published full-page reports on the official ceremony held for the laying of the 'first stone' of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*, attended by members of the *Comité 150 ans après* and the *Sénat coutumier*, as well as by various other local public figures and representatives, including a strong contingent of RPCR politicians such as Lafleur, Frogier and Simon Loueckhote.¹⁹⁴ Lafleur's role and his views articulated during the ceremony unequivocally dominate LNH's coverage.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Recall in particular Mapou's assertion that, through the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative and event, '*nous* [Kanak people] *avons été le poteau central de la nouvelle citoyenneté*': Xavier Serre, 'Comité « 150 ans après » : « Le Mwâ Kâ est vivant ! »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 03/10/2003, 6.

¹⁹⁴ Charlotte Antoine, 'Le mwâ kâ sera le mât d'une pirogue tournée vers l'avenir', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/12/2003, 10; EN, 'LA POSE DE LA PREMIÈRE PIERRE DU MWÂ KÂ : Seul l'avenir compte !', *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 823, 24-30/12/2003, 9.

¹⁹⁵ The lengthy text of this article is almost entirely devoted to reproducing or summarising Lafleur's speech: EN, 'LA POSE DE LA PREMIÈRE PIERRE DU MWÂ KÂ : Seul l'avenir compte !', *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 823, 24-30/12/2003, 9.

Such a Lafleur-focus is less immediately apparent in LNC's coverage, although in its section devoted to quotations from various participants in the ceremony Lafleur is given the most prominence.¹⁹⁶

Lafleur's discourse at this time can in certain respects be seen to have had a different emphasis to the position he articulated earlier in September 2003 in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ*. From the direct quotations published by LNC, Lafleur can still be seen to characterise the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* as a space representing specifically the 'Melanesian' community and thereby rectifying the previous absence of such a representative space (and placing Kanak people overall on an equal footing with the country's other ethno-cultural communities).¹⁹⁷ However, Lafleur can be seen to particularly emphasise his construction (which he represents as also being that of Decoiré and the *Comité 150 ans après*) of the *Mwâ Kâ* as signifying and symbolising the definitive collective 'closure' of the past and (re)orientation towards the future. Furthermore, Lafleur asserts the purported continuity between his perspective (and that of the *Comité*) in this regard with that of Jean-Marie Tjibaou.¹⁹⁸

Lafleur's characterisation of the *Mwâ Kâ* as being designed to orient '*les habitants de Calédonie vers l'avenir*' does, at first sight, appear to accurately reflect one of the *Comité 150 ans après*'s discursive constructions of the *Mwâ Kâ*'s signification. Certainly both its discursive construction by Lafleur and by the *Comité* were designed to demarcate and separate the category of 'the past' from those of 'the present' and 'the

¹⁹⁶ Lafleur also appears prominently in three of the four photographs reproduced with this article. Charlotte Antoine, 'Le mwâ kâ sera le mât d'une pirogue tournée vers l'avenir', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/12/2003, 10. It might be noted that Narcisse Decoiré also features relatively prominently in the texts and images of this article, which is reflective of his general prominence as a representative of the *Comité 150 ans après* in LNC's coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* published in 2003, 2004 and 2005. In contrast, the coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* published throughout this period by LI gives considerably more prominence to Georges Mandaoué as a representative of the project's organisers.

¹⁹⁷ Charlotte Antoine, 'Le mwâ kâ sera le mât d'une pirogue tournée vers l'avenir', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/12/2003, 10. See the discussion of this point above.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. The newspaper quotes Lafleur as follows: '[q]uand Narcisse Decoiré m'a expliqué toute la symbolique du mwâ kâ qui oriente les habitants de Calédonie vers l'avenir, je l'ai d'autant mieux compris que quinze ans auparavant, Jean-Marie Tjibaou m'avait expliqué ses points de vue sur l'avenir. On ne revient pas sur le passé, avait-il affirmé, c'est l'avenir qui compte. C'est exactement ce que je ressens.'

future' in certain specific respects. However, such a temporal discursive demarcation can be interpreted and strategically mobilised in very different ways for very different ends.

As noted above, the *Comité* can overall be seen to have mobilised this discourse primarily as a means of seeking a change in the relative socio-political position held by different groups within New Caledonian society. Notably, the *Comité*'s focus can be identified as the assertion of the central role and legitimacy of the Kanak people and their contemporary official 'customary' representatives in the country's present and future, justified by the construction of particular historical 'facts' and narratives supporting the precedence and persisting primary political legitimacy of the Kanak people (as the country's indigenous people) and their recognised 'customary' representatives.

However, given the often vague terms in which the *Comité* tends to refer to the past which is to be symbolically '*enterré*' through the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative, this element of the *Comité*'s discourse is left open to interpretation as signifying the '*enterrement*' not only of the country's colonial past and its continuing negative implications for the indigenous people, but 'the past' as an undifferentiated whole, thereby undermining the historical foundation legitimising Kanak claims to a special position and particular rights as the country's colonised indigenous people and associated calls for the transformation of the established status quo.¹⁹⁹

Particularly in light of LNH's coverage of Lafleur's position articulated at this ceremony in December 2003, including his expressed support of the *Mwâ Kâ* as an initiative designed to orient '*les habitants de Calédonie vers l'avenir*', and his affirmation and appropriation of Tjibaou's purported view that '*[o]n ne revient pas sur*

¹⁹⁹ This analysis draws on some of the more general critiques that have made in relation to certain academic history writing. Thus, Bain Attwood identifies 'past', 'present' and 'future' as the temporal categories which 'lie at the heart' of history's 'operations', and notes that: '[b]y insisting on the very temporal categories — past, present and future — that lie at the heart of its operations, history, it has been argued, creates a sense of distance between the past and present that tends to deny the presence of the past.' Attwood (2005b: 248).

le passé, c'est l'avenir qui compte',²⁰⁰ Lafleur's discourse can itself be identified as a means of defending and perpetuating the maintenance of the contemporary status quo in New Caledonia.

This aspect of Lafleur's discourse is also particularly emphasised and appropriated by the LNH in its coverage of this event.²⁰¹ Moreover, towards the end of LNH's article Lafleur is also cited directly as stating that: *'l'avenir se construira en regardant devant, pas en malaxant le passé, chacun à notre façon*.'²⁰² Earlier in this article he is also quoted as affirming that the 'motivation' of the *Mwâ Kâ* project: *'englobe le nettoyage du passé et la nécessité pour les habitants de la Nouvelle-Calédonie de se tourner vers l'avenir*.'²⁰³ In elaborating on this so-called '*nettoyage du passé*', LNH states that:

*Jacques Lafleur a invité tous les Calédoniens à considérer ce passé avec lucidité. "Le passé, a-t-il dit, cela sert à expliquer beaucoup de choses, à comprendre que certaines choses ont été bien et que d'autres ne l'ont pas été." Et il a de nouveau développé une idée qui lui est chère : "Je ne crois pas que dans la colonisation, la France a fait plus mal que d'autres. Au contraire ! Et il faut que chacun comprenne bien que si ce n'était la France qui était venue ici, cela aurait été l'Angleterre ou l'Espagne, ou même le Portugal."*²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ This phrase is, moreover, presented as a direct quotation from Tjibaou himself in the LNH's coverage. EN, 'LA POSE DE LA PREMIÈRE PIERRE DU MWÂ KÂ : Seul l'avenir compte !', *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 823, 24-30/12/2003, 9.

²⁰¹ For example, the most prominent part of the headline for this coverage proclaims in large, red font: '[s]eul l'avenir compte !' The lead paragraph of this article characterises the *Mwâ Kâ* as a '*symbole de l'avenir commun des Calédoniens et de la volonté de construire ensemble une communauté de destin*', which, subsequent to the resolution of its initially problematic definitive placement in Noumea, '*est devenu le symbole de la compréhension mutuelle des communautés et de leur volonté de se tourner délibérément vers l'avenir*.' The following subheadings in red punctuate the article's main body of text and refer directly to elements of Lafleur's speech: '*Le nettoyage du passé*'; '*Un geste tourné vers l'avenir*'; '*Ça ne sert à rien de malaxer le passé*'. EN, 'LA POSE DE LA PREMIÈRE PIERRE DU MWÂ KÂ : Seul l'avenir compte !', *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 823, 24-30/12/2003, 9.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

This passage is significant in several respects. Firstly, Lafleur's use of the past tense in relation to the subjects he identifies as being usefully open to elucidation and 'understanding' through a consideration and evaluation of the past can be seen to confine any such appreciation to things existing in the past, rather than extending to the contemporary situation, the strict discursive division between the past and the present thereby being maintained and the interrelationships between the past and the present being occluded. Also significant is the particular historical narrative mobilised by Lafleur in relation to France's colonisation of New Caledonia (which is itself discussed in the past tense). This historical narrative works simultaneously to firstly justify and legitimise France's colonisation of the country through its contextualisation and narrative inscription within the broader global history of colonisation,²⁰⁵ and secondly to valorise the country's colonisation by France, as compared to any other colonial power.

Lafleur's strategic appropriation in 2003 of the *Comité 150 ans après*'s discursive construction of the *Mwâ Kâ*'s symbolism (itself deemed by Lafleur to reflect Tjibaou's purported view that '[o]n ne revient pas sur le passé, c'est l'avenir qui compte') can be identified as corresponding to a position long held by Lafleur on the acknowledgement and construction of New Caledonia's colonial 'past'. One illustration of this is his critique in 1982 of Roch Pidjot's address on Kanak history and colonisation delivered during the culturo-political day organised in the *Place des cocotiers* by the *Front Indépendantiste* to mark the 24 September anniversary in that year.²⁰⁶ Another example is Lafleur's 1998 comments regarding the significance of the Noumea Accord's Preamble shortly after the agreement was officially signed.²⁰⁷ In all of these instances, the discursive strategies mobilised by Lafleur can be seen to legitimate and/or perpetuate the contemporary socio-political status quo in New Caledonia. This

²⁰⁵ As noted in the Introduction, the same discursive strategy can also be identified in the historical narrative elaborated in the Noumea Accord's Preamble.

²⁰⁶ 'JACQUES LAFLEUR : « IL EST IMPOSSIBLE DE TRANSFORMER LE REVE EN REALITE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/09/1982, 9. See the discussion in Annex 4.

²⁰⁷ 'JACQUES LAFLEUR ET LES ACCORDS DE NOUMÉA – « S'EMANCIPER SANS S'ELOIGNER... »', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, 22/05/1998, 6. See the discussion in Chapter Two.

illustrates the vulnerability to strategic appropriation and radical transformation of the *Comité*'s discursive construction of the *Mwâ Kâ* as a symbol of the local population's collective 'enterrement' of the past and reorientation towards the construction of 'common destiny' into the future.²⁰⁸

Given the dramatic political upheaval in New Caledonia produced by the May 2004 provincial elections and Frogier's public opposition to the 24 September *Mwâ Kâ* event from 2004, it is also important to consider Frogier's 2003 position on the *Mwâ Kâ* expressed in the speech he delivered during his 'impromptu' visit with Lafleur to the 24 September celebrations. This speech was identified by LNH as having been delivered by Frogier on behalf of Lafleur and the RPCR.²⁰⁹ Nevertheless, Frogier's discursive construction and appropriation of the *Mwâ Kâ* can be distinguished from that articulated by Lafleur.

Frogier is cited on several occasions by LNH as characterising the symbolism and meaning of the *Mwâ Kâ* as concerning the past 150 years of 'notre [Kanak and non-Kanak] *histoire commune*'.²¹⁰ In his speech, Frogier can be seen to appropriate, but also

²⁰⁸ A clear example of this vulnerability can also be identified in the following quotation from Decoiré published by LNC in September 2005 in relation to the official inauguration of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*: '[u]ne nouvelle page va se tourner puisque la pensée que nous [le Comité 150 ans après] avons eue en 2003 se concrétise aujourd'hui, en 2005. Le Mwâ Kâ est enfin assis chez lui, définitivement. Nous avons vécu avec lui pendant cent cinquante ans [sic] et nous l'avons ramené dans la clairière pour qu'il sorte de l'ombre. Aujourd'hui, il est donc temps d'arrêter les compteurs et de construire quelque chose de nouveau, de partir tous dans la même direction !' Xavier Serre, 'Questions à ... Narcisse Decoiré, sculpteur de Saint-Louis : « Un appel au changement ! »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 3. Decoiré's use of this 'arrêter les compteurs' metaphor in particular can be seen to resonate strongly with Lafleur's position and particular appropriation of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in 2003, and might easily be interpreted as a renunciation of any further claims for redress (such as, for example, the restitution of lands or the payment of reparations) in relation to past wrongs committed during or produced by the colonial period. The 'danger' inherent to this aspect of the *Comité*'s discourse (which was also frequently appropriated by LNC in its coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiatives from 2003) is similarly identified by Guiart in his critique of the *Mwâ Kâ* and associated celebrations published in 2005 by LI: see Jean Guiart, 'Le mwâka : une aventure ambiguë', *Les Infos*, no. 157, 07/10/05, 4. Some similarities are also apparent between the types of critiques of the *Mwâ Kâ* articulated by Guiart and the view expressed by Ignace Païta in a 2004 text again published by LI: see Ignace Païta, 'Tribune libre...', *Les Infos*, no. 109, 22/10/2004, 1.

²⁰⁹ '24 septembre : rattachement de la Calédonie à la France. Commémorer ensemble', *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 810, 25/09–01/10/2003, 8.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

to partially modify and effectively transform the *Comité 150 ans après*'s construction of the *Mwâ Kâ* as symbolising the conclusion of one period of New Caledonian history and the beginning of another:

[L]e *Mwâ Khâ*, c'est à la fois une histoire qui se termine mais aussi et surtout le fondement, l'assise, d'une histoire qu'ensemble et en commun nous avons entrepris d'écrire. Une histoire ouverte par l'acte fondateur que constitue la poignée de mains du 26 juin 1988. Pour nous, clairement, l'avenir c'est le temps du destin commun, engagé depuis l'Accord de Nouméa, dans la case commune, sculptée à la tête du *Mwâ Khâ*.²¹¹

In contrast to the *Comité*'s construction of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and the associated public event in 2003 as being designed to symbolise and realise the 'closure' of the country's past and the 'opening' towards its future or '*destin commun*', Frogier thus also identifies and ultimately prioritises the Lafleur–Tjibaou handshake on the 26 June 1988 as the key, seminal moment symbolising and bringing about this affirmed break with the past and the beginning of a new future or 'common destiny'. While Frogier appropriates and mobilises parts of the discourse of the Noumea Accord such as the '*destin commun*' concept and project, he effectively projects its origin back to the earlier 1988 handshake.²¹² As highlighted in the coverage of both LNC and LNH, Frogier also proposed in his speech to make the 26 June (rather than the 24 September) a '*date de commémoration commune pour tous les Calédoniens*'.²¹³

²¹¹ Ibid. A very similar construction also appears in a communiqué released soon after the 24 September 2003 by the Government of New Caledonia (which was under Frogier's presidency and dominated by the RPCR at the time), extracts from which were reproduced by LNC: 'Un 24 Septembre le 26 juin?', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10.

²¹² '24 septembre : rattachement de la Calédonie à la France. Commémorer ensemble', *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 810, 25/09–01/10/2003, 8. Frogier characterises the handshake as '*l'acte fondateur*' on two occasions and as '*ce geste que nous avons tous partagé, que nous avons en mémoire et qui fonde ce destin commun*'. LNH itself also emphasises the 'foundational' nature of this act in the subheading which appears above the extracts reproduced from Frogier's speech: '*LA POIGNÉE DE MAIN DU 26 JUIN – L'ACTE FONDATEUR*'.

²¹³ Xavier Serre and Ingrid Chanéné, 'Commémorer le 26 juin?', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 2. See also '24 septembre : rattachement de la Calédonie à la France. Commémorer ensemble', *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 810, 25/09–01/10/2003, 8. The same suggestion, and the 'foundational' character of the 1988 handshake, were also signalled in the New Caledonian Government communiqué:

The 24 September 2004: a modified symbolic repertoire in the emerging *Place du Mwâ Kâ* and a radically altered political context

In mid-September 2004, the *Mwâ Kâ* was installed in its permanent position, *Baie de la Moselle*, and the statue's incorporation into a larger public monument in its own square was underway. The plan for the landscaping of the square had been determined towards the end of 2003 by the City Council of Noumea in consultation with the *Comité 150 ans après*.²¹⁴ According to LNC's report in December 2003 on the occasion of the symbolic 'laying of the first stone' of the square, the plan for the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* had been built

'Un 24 Septembre le 26 juin?', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10. Frogier and his Government's emphasis on the Lafleur-Tjibaou handshake can be seen to have several political motivations (as was intimated at the time by LI: Thierry Squillario, 'Gomès et Martin prennent date', *Les Infos*, no. 54, 03/10/2003, 2). It clearly constructs the figures of Lafleur and Tjibaou as the 'founding fathers' of contemporary New Caledonia and its projected future, a mantle appropriated and mobilised solely by Lafleur subsequent to Tjibaou's death. Indeed, Lafleur can be seen to have frequently purported to speak for Tjibaou as well as himself, as a means of constructing himself as the sole remaining true political authority and the legitimate representative of the entire population of New Caledonia. The 1988 handshake was and is still also regularly used by the RPCR/*Rassemblement*-UMP as a means of legitimating the party as a (if not the) preeminent local political actor and agent. An emphasis on the 1988 handshake can also be seen to shift the focus away from the Noumea Accord back to the Matingon Accords, a particularly advantageous shift from the RPCR/*Rassemblement*-UMP's perspective, given, on the one hand, its specific political program and orientations (which can overall be characterised as working to maintain and reinforce the established local status quo) and, on the other, the different political implications of each of these agreements. The Noumea Accord addresses the past, present and future of New Caledonia primarily in reference to the '*fait colonial*' and can consequently be seen to engender certain significant shifts in relation to the previously established socio-political order and the recognised relative legitimacy and respective positions of the country's Kanak and established non-Kanak inhabitants. Moreover, the Noumea Accord not only contains a fixed timetable and program for the country's progressive and irreversible increased autonomy, it also contains certain new concepts (including the category of local 'citizenship' and the ideas of '*décolonisation*', '*émancipation*', '*souveraineté partagée*' and local '*signes identitaires*') which pose particular difficulties for the RPCR/*Rassemblement*-UMP as a conservative political party staunchly attached to the '*valeurs de la République*' (which include the constitutionally enshrined principle of a single, indivisible and undifferentiated category of French citizenship, concomitant to the indivisible nature of the French Republic itself) and New Caledonia's continued status as a part of the French Republic. In contrast, the '*fait colonial*' tended overall to be one step removed from the agreement enshrined in the Matingon Accords, which focused rather on bringing an end to the immediate situation of local conflict and violence, and which do not similarly institute the same degree of significant symbolic and actual change to the established local socio-political order. Frogier's proposition of making the 26 June the date of a shared collective local commemoration could thus be viewed as a means of similarly shifting the focus away from the problematic (from the perspective of the RPCR/*Rassemblement*-UMP) subject of the '*fait colonial*' and its implications for the country's present and future, particularly in light of the contemporary Noumea Accord context.

²¹⁴ Charlotte Antoine, 'Le mwâ kâ sera le mât d'une pirogue tournée vers l'avenir', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/12/2003, 10.

around the symbolism of the '*pirogue*' (a traditional seafaring vessel), which had been selected for this function by the *Comité*.²¹⁵ Thus, the statue's original dominant set of symbolic references as the *poteau central* of a *grande case* (symbolising the construction of the country's future 'common destiny'), was overlaid and intertwined with the symbolic repertoire of the Kanak (and, indeed, Oceanic) *pirogue*, conceived by the *Comité* as representing the '*grande pirogue du destin commun*'.²¹⁶ In this new schema, the *Mwâ Kâ* figures as the mast of this metaphorical *pirogue*, the statue having been set in a concrete base which is shaped to represent the form of a traditional *pirogue double*.

As highlighted by Guiart in a text published by LI in 2005, '*la pirogue est généralement en Océanie le symbole du corps social*'.²¹⁷ As a metaphor for the '*corps social*', the *pirogue* could be seen to have the advantage in comparison to the *grande case* of also encompassing the idea of collective movement through space and time on a chosen course. The *pirogue* metaphor thus captures the idea of the collective, conscious 'navigation' of a unified social group from the past to the present and into the future. This 'journey' of New Caledonian society through time is also explicitly constructed in the terms of the Noumea Accord through the engraved block of nickel ore which is situated in the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* at the internal end of a path of *pins colonnaires*, where the path opens out to an internal space (enclosed on all sides by vegetation) of grass and paths leading up to and around the elevated cement *pirogue* and the *Mwâ Kâ* statue itself.²¹⁸

It is important to note that despite this mobilisation of the *pirogue* metaphor, which might tend to highlight the Oceanic character of Kanak identity and of the country, no

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ For example, in an interview in 2007, Adèle Buama emphasised that: '[L]a pirogue, c'est vers là où tu vas, le destin.' Lurton (2007: 86).

²¹⁷ Jean Guiart, 'Le mwâka : une aventure ambiguë', *Les Infos*, no. 157, 07/10/05, 4.

²¹⁸ As at July 2009. As noted previously, this stone is engraved with the following key extract from the Noumea Accord: '...le passé a été le temps de la colonisation. Le présent est le temps du partage par le rééquilibrage. L'avenir doit être le temps de l'identité dans un destin commun...'

particular emphasis seems to have been placed by the *Comité 150 ans après* on stressing the cultural links between the Kanak people and the other Oceanic communities living in the country. Similarly, the *Mwâ Kâ* statue itself does not physically or symbolically incorporate any elements representing local non-Kanak Oceanic communities and their culture, or emphasise any links between Kanak people/culture and different indigenous peoples/cultures from the Pacific region. The salient distinction structuring the key events (and the modality of the participation of each local ethnic community in those events) organised by the *Comité* around the *Mwâ Kâ* since 2003 has been the distinction between the Kanak people as the country's indigenous people, on the one hand, and the various non-Kanak local communities, which have all generally been included and treated on an equal footing, regardless of any possible Oceanic connections, on the other.²¹⁹

Another symbolically significant element of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* is the design of the landscaped garden itself. In total, the square covers 1800 m² of land, the majority of which is devoted to a so-called 'ethno-botanical' garden, which incorporates plants purportedly chosen to represent all of the Territory's different ethno-cultural communities.²²⁰ In the lead-up to the 2005 inauguration of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*, LNC characterises the square as a '*belle réussite*' and emphasises its incorporation of these

²¹⁹ This remains the case despite the more frequent incorporation of local Polynesian dance groups in comparison to groups from the other local ethno-cultural communities in the program of cultural performances which have often formed part of the events organised each year by the *Comité* to mark the 24 September anniversary around the *Mwâ Kâ*. The primary focus and emphasis of the *Comité* appears not to have been placed on these cultural performances or the different stalls often set up in conjunction with the 24 September commemoration/celebrations, but on the key symbolic, popular (if highly orchestrated) and/or official ('customary' and/or 'political') events organised to mark the anniversary in various years.

²²⁰ Thus, Christophe André, identified as '*le responsable des espaces verts de la mairie de Nouméa*', is quoted by LNC in December 2003 as stating in relation to the choice of plants for this 'ethno-botanical' garden: '[o]n pense notamment aux pommiers pour la métropole, au tiaré ou frangipanier pour les Tahitiens.' Charlotte Antoine, 'Le mwâ kâ sera le mât d'une pirogue tournée vers l'avenir', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 22/12/2003, 10. As noted in Annex 8, a similar initiative was incorporated into the ceremonies organised in the CCT's *Mwakaa* to mark the Centre's tenth anniversary in 2008, when particular plants selected to represent the country's various ethno-cultural communities were planted by children from the relevant communities within the grounds of the *Mwakaa*: Del Rio (2008: 2).

plants representing ‘*toutes les communautés*’,²²¹ although at no point in this newspaper’s coverage of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* from 2003 (or, indeed, in any other local publication) are the specific plants and their symbolism actually identified.

This ‘ethno-botanical’ garden has particular significance as it represents the only element incorporated into the public square which has been designed specifically to concretely symbolise the country’s established non-Kanak ethno-cultural communities in addition to the Kanak community. However, no signs or other explanatory devices allow for the identification of these plants and their symbolism, neither of which is otherwise immediately apparent to the visitor.²²² Indeed, beyond the use of certain plants of particular significance in Kanak culture, such as the pathway of *pins colonnaires* for example, the fact that the choice of plants has any signification at all is far from manifest or self-evident.²²³

On the 24 September 2004, the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* was still only in the initial stages of construction. The primary reasons for this delay appear to have been the change in the position of Lafleur and his party in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative early in 2004 and, as noted by LI, the ‘*mis en sommeil [de] ce dossier*’ subsequent to the political upheavals produced by the Provincial elections in May 2004.²²⁴

In February 2004, Lafleur had publicly demanded the removal of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue from the premises of the Southern Province following the erection by the ‘*Conseil coutumier de l’aire Ajie Aro*’ of a ‘*revendicative*’ symbolic case on the Gouaro Deva property at Bourail (an area which had been the subject of ‘customary’ land claims since

²²¹ These points are made twice in Xavier Serre, ‘Mwâ Kâ : La place du destin commun’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 2.

²²² The same problem can be identified in relation to the plants incorporated into the CCT’s *Mwakaa* in 2008, the symbolism of which is not identified on the site, as discussed in Annex 8.

²²³ Moreover, according to LNC’s report in February 2007 on the repeated vandalism of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*, a number of the plants representing the different communities were stolen from the site. JB, ‘Le Mwâ Kâ n’en finit plus de subir des dégradations’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/02/2007, 8. It is unclear whether these plants were ever replaced by plants of the same species.

²²⁴ PC, ‘Le retour du Mwâ Kâ’, *Les Infos*, no. 103, 10/09/2004, 3.

the 1980s) to denounce its commercial sale by the Southern Province.²²⁵ LNC reproduced several passages from Lafleur's letter to the President of the *Comité 150 ans après*, Pierre Zéoula, apparently demanding the removal of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue within eight days.²²⁶ Lafleur is cited in the newspaper as having explained this demand and his radical change of position in this letter in the following terms:

[L]e *Mwa Ka* devait représenter l'avenir de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, tout racisme exclu. Mais je m'aperçois à divers titres que j'ai été trompé. Le *Mwa Ka* est devenu la manifestation d'une étape, d'une revendication parmi toutes les revendications systématiques qui se font jour [...].²²⁷

Despite Lafleur's radical change in position in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* in February 2004, LNC itself can be seen to place a certain distance between Lafleur's position and actions at this time and its own position, stating: '[e]n menaçant le *Mwa Ka*, Jacques Lafleur s'attaque à un symbole fort'.²²⁸ Moreover, the newspaper still characterises the objectives of the statue as having been to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the 'prise de possession' and ultimately to 'faire le deuil d'une histoire souvent douloureuse pour regarder vers l'avenir, pour construire un destin commun'.²²⁹

Notwithstanding Lafleur's demand for the statue's immediate removal, nothing further appears to have resulted from this incident. Consequently, the *Mwâ Kâ* was still located within the premises of the Southern Province when the Provincial elections in May

²²⁵ See, in particular, 'Gouaro Deva : la polémique enfle', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/02/2004, 10; 'Combien vaut Gouaro Deva ?' *Le Chien bleu*, no. 67, March 2004, 3; and the coverage published by LI in the following editions: no. 65 and nos 73–76. It is also worth noting that, in a 'Lettre ouverte aux Néo-Calédoniens' signed by Pascal Naouna as the President of the UC at that time, reproduced by LNC on the 27 February 2004, that political party officially supported the groups claiming 'customary' land rights over the Gouaro Deva area and recalled that it 'était dès l'origine opposé à une utilisatn politicienne' of the *Mwâ Kâ*: 'L'UC justifie les revendications foncières', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/02/2004, 11.

²²⁶ 'Gouaro Deva : la polémique enfle', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/02/2004, 10.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

2004 produced a dramatic change in the local political landscape.²³⁰ As discussed previously, these elections saw Lafleur's decline, the marginalisation of the *Rassemblement*–UMP in the local political institutions, and the rise of the rival and more moderate 'loyalist' party, *Avenir Ensemble*.

As suggested by the name chosen for this new 'loyalist' party, *Avenir Ensemble*'s political platform and discourse purported to be directly inscribed in the dynamic of the Noumea Accord. This is apparent in the statements made in mid-September by *Avenir Ensemble*'s Philippe Michel during the 'customary' ceremonies held to signal the 'return' of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue to the *Comité 150 ans après*'s custodianship before its removal from the grounds of the Southern Province and its permanent installation at the site of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*.²³¹ *Les Nouvelles Caléoniennes* cites Michel as affirming:

[s]ur la symbolique de ce Mwaka [...] le nouvel exécutif de la Province est parfaitement en phase avec la volonté d'ouverture et de partage de la société kanak dont vous [le Comité] avez voulu témoigner pour marquer l'intégration du peuple premier dans la construction du destin, commun.²³²

By reason of the delays to the construction of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*, its official inauguration was postponed until the 24 September 2005. However, an interim event,

²³⁰ Indeed, it appears that some suggested (ironically) that the *Mwâ Kâ*'s implantation in the premises of the Southern Province played an active (possibly even decisive) part in Lafleur's demise, as a sort of spiritual Kanak Trojan horse. This idea is reflected in a short text published by LCB in November 2003, entitled '*Un boucan nommé Mwaka*', which affirms the following: '[J]allait s'en douter, "certains" estiment que le Mwaka est un boucan qui a été introduit à la Maison bleue. L'objectif serait d'influencer papy pour qu'il prenne des décisions favorables aux Kanaks. À la moindre grippe du vieux, on vous parie qu'on en entendra parler... C'est Frogier qui doit flipper : il y croit dur comme fer à ces trucs-là. Nous, bien sûr, on n'y croit pas, ça porte malheur...' '*Un boucan nommé Mwaka*', *Le Chien bleu*, no. 63, November 2003, 3.

²³¹ Michel is identified by *Les Nouvelles Caléoniennes* as a Vice-President of the Southern Province and as speaking on behalf of its new President, Philippe Gomès. 'Le Mwâ kâ restitué aux coutumiers à quelques jours de son déménagement', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 15/09/2004, available online only at <<http://www.lnc.nc>> (from the 8 to the 23 September 2004 no printed editions of LNC appear to have been produced due to a strike).

²³² Ibid.

referred to by LNC as ‘*la cérémonie d’implantation définitive*’ of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue,²³³ was held at the uncompleted square to mark the 24 September anniversary in 2004. According to this newspaper’s coverage, the *Comité 150 ans après* publicly (through the local press itself) invited ‘« *tout le monde* » *dans le même esprit fraternel que l’an dernier*’,²³⁴ and apparently aimed to create another ‘« *moment fort* » *de partage, autour de l’idée du destin commun*’.²³⁵ However, the event was conceived on a smaller scale in comparison to the previous year and its only element designed to engender the active participation of the public *en masse*, beyond their presence as passive spectators,²³⁶ was the ‘*pilou*’²³⁷ that signalled the end of the formal part of the day’s ceremonies.²³⁸ Thus, according to LNC: ‘[à] *la manière kanak, c’est un pilou, auquel ont participé le public et les représentants des institutions, qui a fermé la cérémonie d’implantation du Mwâ Ka*’.²³⁹

The key symbolic gesture organised by the *Comité* as the ‘*moment fort*’²⁴⁰ of this 2004 event was the replacement of the eight mini-*flèches faîtières* inscribed with the names of the *aires coutumières* to their original positions on either side of *Mwâ Kâ* statue. The replacement of each *flèche* was performed by a pair of children, one of whom was a Kanak child from the relevant *aire coutumière* and the other, a child from one of the different ethno-cultural communities now established in New Caledonia. This

²³³ ‘Le Mwaka transféré place de la Moselle’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/09/2004, available online only at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

²³⁴ ‘Le Mwâ kâ restitué aux coutumiers à quelques jours de son déménagement’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 15/09/2004, available online only at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

²³⁵ ‘Le Mwaka transféré place de la Moselle’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/09/2004, available online only at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

²³⁶ According to LNC’s main report on the event published the following day: ‘[p]lusieurs milliers de personnes, moins que l’an dernier, ont participé à ce 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka et du destin commun.’ Henri Lepot, ‘Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 2.

²³⁷ This generic term is now used commonly to refer to a collective celebration and dance identified as being a form of Kanak ‘cultural expression’.

²³⁸ Henri Lepot, ‘Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 3.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ ‘Le 24 septembre autour du Mwâ Ka’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/09/2004, 5.

choreography was clearly designed to symbolise the desired multi-ethnic participation in the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative.²⁴¹ Moreover, the involvement of children was represented as symbolising the country's future and the '*destin commun*'.²⁴²

The radically transformed political context also resulted in an unprecedented level of programmed political participation in the event. According to LNC's coverage: '*Gouvernement, Congrès, Province sud, Etat et même FLNKS étaient représentés. Ne manquaient que la mairie de Nouméa et le Rassemblement.*'²⁴³ Until 2010, no *Rassemblement*–UMP politician would participate in the event held at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* on the 24 September as an official representative of the party. Indeed, from 2004 to 2009, Frogier organised rival, *Rassemblement*–UMP events to mark the anniversary.

The highly critical view of the *Mwâ Kâ* and related initiatives held by the *Rassemblement*–UMP in 2004 is clearly apparent in the coverage of the 24 September event held at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* published by LNH, which was still being published by Lafleur and the *Rassemblement*–UMP.²⁴⁴ The front page of the first edition

²⁴¹ Thus, Decoiré is quoted by LNC as referring to this part of the day's ceremonies as being designed to '*rassembler tous les gens du pays*'. 'Le Mwâ kâ restitué aux coutumiers à quelques jours de son déménagement', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 15/09/2004, available online only at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

²⁴² LNC thus affirmed in an article just prior to this event: '[c]hoisis pour le symbole, parce que la jeunesse représentent l'avenir et le destin commun, ils travailleront en binômes, chacun associant un jeune Kanak représentant son aire coutumière et un jeune d'une autre communauté, habillé si possible en tenue traditionnelle de sa culture. Une place sera ainsi faite aux Calédoniens, Wallisiens et Futuniens, Indonésiens, Vietnamiens, etc. Les organisateurs ont même veillé à ce que, dans la représentation des populations non-kanak, un enfant représente les résidents non-français.' 'Le 24 septembre autour du Mwâ Ka', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/09/2004, 5. In the following edition's coverage, the newspaper similarly characterised these children as: '[l]es enfants du Mwâ Ka, ceux qui représente le destin commun.' Henri Lepot, 'Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 2. The names of the children involved in this ceremony, as well as those of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue's sculptors, were purportedly to have been engraved on a '*stèle*' which was to have been installed near the foot of the statue: Henri Lepot, 'Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 2. However, this original intention was never realised.

²⁴³ Henri Lepot, 'Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 3.

²⁴⁴ See the discussion in the Introduction.

published after the event includes the headline ‘*MWÂ KA : Un symbole détourné*’,²⁴⁵ accompanied by two photographs: the first shows a group of Kanak men with the FLNKS flag and the *Mwâ Kâ* in the background; the second shows Marie-Noëlle Thémereau, Christiane Gambey, Harold Martin and Déwé Gorodey at the front of a crowd, dancing.²⁴⁶ The introductory text to the associated article recounts a *Rassemblement*–UMP-oriented construction of the *Mwâ Kâ* and its history in 2003, particularly emphasising the (purportedly benevolent and positive) involvement of and perspectives articulated by Lafleur and Frogier at that time. This is then directly contrasted to the 2004 *Mâ Kâ* event and the involvement of *Avenir Ensemble* and FLNKS politicians. LNH states:

*l’implantation définitive du Mwâ Kâ [...] a laissé libre court à la revendication identitaire et à la récupération politique. Les élus de l’Avenir Ensemble ont voulu confisquer le symbole, à des fins politiques, et le FLNKS l’associer à son vingtième anniversaire et à ses revendications indépendantistes. Dommage... et inquiétant !*²⁴⁷

In contrast, the main article published by LI on the 2004 *Mwâ Kâ* event comprises a sustained critique of the *Rassemblement*–UMP’s politics and its absence at the event.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ The corresponding two-page article published by LNH, is similarly headlined: ‘24 SEPTEMBRE, IMPLANTATION DÉFINITIVE DU MWÂ KA : Détournement de symbole !’, *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 862, 30/09-06/10/2004, 16-17. This article comprises a considerable number of photographs (the majority of which feature *Avenir Ensemble* or FLNKS politicians or members of the *Comité 150 ans après* at the event), the newspaper’s commentary, some citations from Lafleur and extracts from the official speeches made on the day.

²⁴⁶ ‘MWÂ KA : Un symbole détourné’, *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 862, 30/09-06/10/2004, 1.

²⁴⁷ ‘24 SEPTEMBRE, IMPLANTATION DÉFINITIVE DU MWÂ KA : Détournement de symbole !’, *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 862, 30/09-06/10/2004, 16. These two principal criticisms can also be seen to underlie the negative implications of the sub-heading, ‘[t]out se termine par un grand pilou !’, which appears above a series of photographs depicting *Avenir Ensemble* and FLNKS politicians dancing in front of a crowd: *ibid.*, 17. LNH also includes a series of photographs showing a ‘jeune mélanésien’ climb to the top of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue ‘pour y faire flotter l’emblème indépendantiste’ (the FLNKS/Kanaky flag). According to the paper: ‘Raphël Mapou l’a immédiatement renvoyé récupérer son emblème, après l’avoir sérieusement sermoné’, a discussion which also appears to be captured in one of the photographs in this series: *ibid.* This incident (which was not covered by LNC or LI) is represented by LNH as being another indication and, indeed, a product of the (so-called) ‘*confusion de genres*’ purportedly evident in the 2004 event.

²⁴⁸ Thierry Squillario, ‘Les absents ont toujours torts’, *Les Infos*, no. 106, 01/10/2004, 3. Another article published in this edition was the reproduction of Gomès’s speech delivered by Gambey: Philippe Gomès,

LNC's coverage is highly positive and does not include any critique of the *Rassemblement-UMP*'s position in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* or any suggestion of the event's inappropriate political appropriation by *Avenir Ensemble* or the FLNKS – on the contrary, particular prominence is given by the daily newspaper to the views expressed by the different political representatives who attended and delivered speeches on the day. While more attention is given by LNC to the day's 'customary' ceremonies when compared to its coverage of this aspect of the 2003 *Mwâ Kâ* event, this attention is nevertheless very minimal in comparison to the high prominence and degree of detail given in relation to the speeches delivered by the political representatives and officials on the day.²⁴⁹

The extracts from these political speeches reproduced by LNC convey a very positive appraisal of the *Mwâ Kâ* as an inclusive initiative, in phase with the Noumea Accord and its 'common destiny' project.²⁵⁰ Almost all of the political speakers also appear to have identified the *Mwâ Kâ* event as having transformed the 24 September anniversary

'Tribune libre...', *Les Infos*, no. 106, 01/10/2004, 1. In addition to these two articles, only three other articles appeared in LI in relation to the 24 September in 2004. One of these was an article published in the lead up to the event in which the political context and history of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative was recounted: PC, 'Le retour du Mwâ Kâ', *Les Infos*, no. 103, 10/09/2004, 3. The remaining two texts appeared in the 'Tribune libre...' section and were both written by Ignace Païta, who was highly critical of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative: Ignace Païta, 'Tribune libre...', *Les Infos*, no. 105, 24/09/2004, 1; Ignace Païta, 'Tribune libre...', *Les Infos*, no. 109, 22/10/2004, 1. One subject of Païta's criticism in these articles was the involvement and support of local politicians in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative.

²⁴⁹ In its two-page coverage of the 24 September 2004, LNC includes only a very broad overview of the order/structure of the 'customary' exchanges which took place, followed by a similarly brief summary of the views expressed by those who spoke during these exchanges, including a number of phrases in direct quotations. In contrast, the newspaper includes a full page of relatively lengthy extracts from the speeches made by six official political representatives on the day, accompanied by a number of photographs. These extracts are each headed by the name of the politician in question, the official capacity in which they spoke on the day and a short quotation from their speech, as follows: 'Christiane Gambey, vice-présidente de la Province sud : « Notre premier signe identitaire »'; 'Marie-Noëlle Thémereau, président du gouvernement : « Plus fort qu'un accord politique »'; 'Dewé Gorodey, vice-présidente du gouvernement : « Le jour du destin commun »'; 'Harold Martin, président du Congrès : « La part de lumière de la colonisation »'; 'Daniel Constantin, haut-commissaire : « Faire vivre le Mwâ Ka »'; 'Charles Pidjot, FLNKS : « Aux citoyens de porter le Mwâ Ka »'. Henri Lepot, 'Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 3. The 'loyalist' political bias of LNC could be seen to be reflected in the reproduction of substantially smaller extracts from the two FLNKS politicians' speeches when compared to the others quoted. Moreover, a portrait image of the speakers is included alongside the extracts from all of these politicians' speeches except in the case of Charles Pidjot.

²⁵⁰ Henri Lepot, 'Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 3.

from a day of division to one of unity.²⁵¹ Several of these speakers directly appropriated elements of the *Comité 150 ans après*'s discursive construction of the *Mwâ Kâ* and its symbolism. Both Thémereau and Gambey (who read Gomès's speech) – all members of *Avenir Ensemble* and only Gambey being Kanak – mobilised the metaphor of the Kanak case in relation to the statue as a symbol of the country's future.²⁵² Pidjot is cited as having referred to the *Mwâ Kâ* statue as '*le Vieux*':

[L]e Vieux qui est là-bas est un acte concret de la mise en œuvre de l'Accord de Nouméa. Il est fort parce qu'il symbolise comment on veut bâtir notre pays, notre destin commun. Chacun doit apporter sa pierre pour le construire. [...] C'est à vous, les citoyens du pays, de porter le Mwâ Ka. En le portant, vous aller porter le pays, donner un avenir et un destin à nos enfants.²⁵³

Direct appropriation from the *Comité*'s discourse is most apparent in the extracts from the speech delivered by Gambey on behalf of Gomès published by LNC, as confirmed by the full text of this speech published by LI.²⁵⁴ A number of additional significations are attributed to the *Mwâ Kâ* in this speech, including that of '*le symbole d'une main tendue, celle du peuple premier*'.²⁵⁵ Gamby/Gomès also maintain that: '[i] symbolise

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Thémereau is quoted as having affirmed that the *Mwâ Kâ* '*représente la case de tout le monde. C'est peut-être plus fort qu'un accord politique*': ibid. Gambey/Gomès are quoted as having affirmed that the *Mwâ Kâ* '*symbolise le poteau central de la grande case du destin commun auquel nous appelle l'Accord de Nouméa*': ibid.; Philippe Gomès, 'Tribune libre...', *Les Infos*, no. 106, 01/10/2004, 1.

²⁵³ Henri Lepot, 'Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 3. Recall the discussion of the *Comité*'s references to the statue as '*le Vieux*' above.

²⁵⁴ Henri Lepot, 'Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 3; Philippe Gomès, 'Tribune libre...', *Les Infos*, no. 106, 01/10/2004, 1. For example, this speech opens with the statement that: '[L]e Mwâ Kâ, c'est notre histoire, l'histoire des peuples de ce pays.' After evoking some of the different motivations and/or circumstances that led to the installation of the '*autres peuples que l'histoire a ballottés jusqu'à ce qu'ils échouent sur les rivages de notre île*', Gambey/Gomès affirm: '[c]ette histoire, notre histoire, le Mwâ Kâ la raconte, entrecoupée de mythes fondateurs kanak.' This last construction echoes LNC's 2003 characterisation, itself seemingly drawn from the discourse of the *Comité*, of the statue's carvings as: '*entremêlant mythes fondateurs kanaks et références historiques à la colonisation*', discussed previously. Henri Lepot, 'Un symbole à déchiffrer de bas en haut', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10.

²⁵⁵ Henri Lepot, 'Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 3; Philippe Gomès, 'Tribune libre...', *Les Infos*, no. 106, 01/10/2004, 1.

aussi la citoyenneté calédonienne, cette citoyenneté qui doit faire des peuples mosaïques de ce pays un seul peuple.²⁵⁶ This affirmation of the (purported) need to form ‘un seul peuple’ in New Caledonia resonates strongly with Gomès’s characterisation of the Noumea Accord process as a ‘*trajectoire commune : celle d’un peuple en devenir*’, in his speech delivered in La Foa on the 24 September 2003.²⁵⁷ However, in 2004, Gambey/Gomès’s speech does implicitly recognise the need for a certain degree of diversity to persist within New Caledonian society, affirming:

[L]e Mwâ Kâ c’est le rêve d’un pays uni dans sa diversité, ayant terrassé ses vieux démons, ayant pardonné le sang versé et les larmes qui ont trop coulé. Le Mwâ Kâ c’est notre premier signe identitaire, un signe qui nous rassemble, qui nous unit, qui témoigne de notre « vouloir vivre ensemble », qui balise le chemin de notre avenir ensemble.²⁵⁸

The reference in this passage to a shared ‘« vouloir vivre ensemble »’ is also identifiable in Gomès’s 2003 speech.²⁵⁹ A similar idea appears in the extract reproduced from Marie-Noëlle Thémereau’s speech, when she affirms that the Mwâ Kâ: ‘*signifie que, profondément, les hommes et les femmes, au fond d’eux mêmes, ont fait tout un travail, ont réfléchi, ont voulu.*’²⁶⁰

The need to preserve diversity and plurality within New Caledonian society is also emphasised in the speeches of Daniel Constantin (the French High Commissioner) and Harold Martin. Constantin is thus quoted as having stated of the Noumea Accord: ‘*ce n’est pas la négation des communautés, ce n’est pas l’unification, c’est la personnalité*

²⁵⁶ Henri Lepot, ‘Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 3; Philippe Gomès, ‘Tribune libre...’, *Les Infos*, no. 106, 01/10/2004, 1.

²⁵⁷ ‘« Vouloir vivre ensemble »’, *Les Infos*, no. 54, 03/10/2003, 2. See the discussion in Annex 10.

²⁵⁸ Henri Lepot, ‘Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 3; Philippe Gomès, ‘Tribune libre...’, *Les Infos*, no. 106, 01/10/2004, 1. The use of the phrase ‘*avenir ensemble*’ at the end of the the above passage cited from Gamby/Gomès’s speech (a phrase which also appears at the very of this speech, as it is reproduced in full in LI), clearly recalls and reinforces Gambey/Gomès’s political affiliation.

²⁵⁹ ‘« Vouloir vivre ensemble »’, *Les Infos*, no. 54, 03/10/2003, 2. See the discussion in Annex 10.

²⁶⁰ Henri Lepot, ‘Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 3.

*de chacun qui doit pouvoir s'exprimer.*²⁶¹ Martin, who asserts his own identity as 'un Calédonien' and an 'enfant du pays' in his speech, clearly maintains the need for continuing differentiation between ethno-cultural groups within New Caledonia, stating: '[c]onstruisons ensemble notre pays, que chacun y ait sa place et ses symboles, que chacun puisse faire vivre sa tradition.'²⁶²

LNC itself represents the 24 September 2004 event in a very positive light.²⁶³ On the front page of its 25 September edition, the newspaper's main headline proclaims: '[e]n place pour le destin commun', evoking the Noumea Accord's socio-political project.²⁶⁴ Underneath, a passage of text in bold affirms: '[s]ymbole de la main tendue du peuple kanak aux autres communautés, il [le Mwâ Ka] marque une nouvelle manière de célébrer le 24 Septembre.'²⁶⁵ This construction of the *Mwâ Kâ*, which implicitly inscribes the initiative in a dynamic mode of inter-ethnic reconciliation, echoes Gambey/Gomès's speech.

One of the lead dot-points heading the corresponding article similarly affirms:

*[n]i célébration de l'appartenance à la France, ni jour de deuil kanak : l'implantation du grand poteau sculpté, « main tendue du peuple premier aux autres communautés », a donné, en ce 24 septembre, une idée de ce que pourrait être une fête nationale calédonienne autour du destin commun.*²⁶⁶

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ See particularly Henri Lepot, 'En place pour le destin commun', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 1; Henri Lepot, 'Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 2-3. It might be noted that a number of lengthy extracts taken directly from this article, as well as from the accompanying quotes from the speeches delivered by Gambey and Thémereau, were also reproduced by this newspaper in January 2005 as part of its review of the major local events in 2004. The permanent installation of the *Mwâ Kâ* is presented therein as the most significant event to have taken place in September of that year. '2004 Calédonie – Septembre : Le Mwa Ka installé au cœur de Nouméa', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/01/2005, 2.

²⁶⁴ Henri Lepot, 'En place pour le destin commun', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 1.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Henri Lepot, 'Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 2. A slightly edited version of this passage (omitting the phrase in quotations) was also reproduced as part

This reference to the 24 September 2004 event as giving an idea of ‘*ce que pourrait être une fête nationale calédonienne autour du destin commun*’ is particularly striking in light of this newspaper’s traditionally conservative and staunchly ‘loyalist’ orientation. Moreover, it can be contrasted to the paper’s contention in September 2003 that:

*[p]our une sorte de « fête nationale » calédonienne rassemblant au plus large, le 24 septembre est sans doute encore trop évocateur. Pour les uns du « rattachement », pour les autres de la « colonisation ». Une autre date pourrait se dessiner, celle du 26 juin, anniversaire des accords de Matignon-Oudinot et de la poignée de main Lafleur-Tjibaou.*²⁶⁷

In 2004, ‘*fête nationale*’ is not placed in inverted commas or qualified with the phrase ‘*une sorte de*’, and the possibility disqualified in this 2003 article of the 24 September anniversary as the basis of a unifying and consensual commemorative date is positively affirmed by the newspaper.

LNC’s 2004 reference to the idea of the 24 September as a ‘*fête nationale*’ might reflect the newspaper’s partial appropriation of a view seemingly expressed during the ‘customary’ ceremonies held at the beginning of the day’s celebrations. According to the newspaper’s report, the ‘*orateurs*’ who spoke during these ‘customary’ ceremonies all insisted:

*sur le « bout de tissu qui lie », sur les querelles du passé à oublier, sur la nécessité de constituer « un seul peuple » pour travailler « main dans la main » à bâtir la Calédonie et « faire du 24 Septembre notre fête nationale tranquille et apaisée. »*²⁶⁸

LNC’s use of this phrase was strongly criticised by LNH, which maintained that:

of the newspaper’s January 2005 recap of the major events of 2004: ‘2004 Calédonie – Septembre : Le Mwâ Ka installé au cœur de Nouméa’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/01/2005, 2.

²⁶⁷ ‘Un 24 Septembre le 26 juin ?’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10. Recall that LI similarly identified the RPCR’s suggestion of designating the 26 June (rather than the 24 September) anniversary as a shared and unifying day of local commemoration/celebration as ‘*une fête nationale*’: Thierry Squillario, ‘Gomès et Martin prennent date’, *Les Infos*, no. 54, 03/10/2003, 2.

²⁶⁸ Henri Lepot, ‘Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 2.

[d]ans l'esprit et les dérives de cette cérémonie, le compte-rendu du quotidien qui évoque : "Une idée de ce que pourrait être une fête nationale calédonienne." Il est des mots qui ressemblent à des dérapages !²⁶⁹

The official inauguration of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* and the launch of 'Citizenship Day' in 2005 – Kamorw's journey and the '*coutume d'accueil*'

The official inauguration of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* on the 24 September 2005 is given particular prominence by LNC and LI.²⁷⁰ Moreover, in the discourse of LNC and of members of the *Comité 150 ans après* reproduced therein, this 2005 event is represented as being the final realisation of the original *Mwâ Kâ* project, launched two years earlier.²⁷¹ The *Comité*, LNC and LI all emphasise the importance of this event's incorporation of the active participation of representatives of 12 non-Kanak ethno-cultural groups now established in the country, alongside representatives of the Kanak community.

This community involvement and participation had three main components. Firstly, members of the various local communities were present *en masse* as spectators on the

²⁶⁹ '24 SEPTEMBRE, IMPLANTATION DÉFINITIVE DU MWÂ KÂ : Détournement de symbole !', *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 862, 30/09-06/10/2004, 17.

²⁷⁰ As noted previously, very little attention is paid to the *Mwâ Kâ* by LCB in 2003, 2004 and 2005, after which it disappears almost entirely from this publication's pages. LNH ceased publication in June 2005 (see the discussion in the Introduction).

²⁷¹ Thus, the definitive implantation of the statue and the inauguration of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* are represented by LNC as the positive conclusion to the initiative's previously difficult history up to that point, having been, in the newspaper's terms, '*troublée par de nombreuses polémiques politiques*': Xavier Serre, 'Mwâ Kâ : La place du destin commun', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 2. The quotations published by LNC from Mandaoué as the *Comité*'s Secretary-General just prior to the inauguration also emphasise the past difficulties experienced by the *Comité* in relation to the initiative ('*le chemin n'a pas été facile et [...] il a fallu parfois parler fort pour convaincre*'), as well as the (posited) fact that, '*au bout de trois ans, le message du Mwâ Kâ a finalement été compris par tout le monde*': Xavier Serre, 'Mwâ Kâ : La place du destin commun', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 2. Decoiré is also cited as stating in a similar vein that: '[u]ne nouvelle page va se tourner puisque la pensée que nous avons eue en 2003 se concrétise aujourd'hui, en 2005. Le Mwâ Kâ est enfin assis chez lui, définitivement': Xavier Serre, 'Questions à... Narcisse Decoiré, sculpteur de Saint-Louis « Un appel au changement ! »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 3.

day.²⁷² Secondly, representatives of each of the different ethno-cultural communities successively carried another large wooden statue in a loop through the streets of central Noumea during the event.²⁷³ This statue, which has the name ‘*Kamorw*’ carved at its base, takes the form of a Kanak man holding an oar and is identified in LNC as representing the ‘*barreur qui guidera la pirogue du Mwâ Kâ vers le destin commun*’,²⁷⁴ although it is often also referred to simply as ‘*le Vieux*’.²⁷⁵ This form of active public participation broadly echoed the collective carrying of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue itself in a tour of the streets of the *Baie de la Moselle* on the 24 September 2003. This aspect of the 2005 event and the associated organised participation of representatives of so many of the country’s established ethno-cultural communities are particularly foregrounded by LNC.²⁷⁶

The transportation of this statue was followed by a third particularly significant component of community participation. As ‘explained’ by LNC prior to the event:

²⁷² According to LI, ‘entre 5 et 10 000 personnes’, including ‘représentants de pratiquement toutes les communautés vivant en Nouvelle-Calédonie’, were present to celebrate the inauguration: Thierry Squillario, ‘Le poteau qui cache la forêt’, *Les Infos*, no. 156, 30/09/2005, 2. The headline of LNC’s main article covering the event similarly emphasises the large number of spectator-participants, a fact which is again reiterated in the lead dot-point paragraphs to this article and in the caption to an accompanying photograph. The daily newspaper also presents the event as having taken place: ‘dans une ambiance chaleureuse et œcuménique’. However, while this article (in keeping with those published just prior to the 2005 event) emphasises the involvement of virtually all of the country’s ethno-cultural communities (particularly through the inclusion of sections quoting from their representatives or members), it also signals on two occasions the preponderance of ‘*Mélanésiens*’ in the crowd. See Anne Gaignaire, ‘Des milliers de personnes fêtent le Mwâ Kâ’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 10. One notable exception highlighted on several occasions by the newspaper is the absence of representatives from the local community of ‘*métropolitains*’ who qualify as Caledonian ‘citizens’ but are not assimilable to the ‘European’ settlers (or ‘*Caldoches*’) established in the country for several generations, as discussed below.

²⁷³ See Xavier Serre, ‘Deux jours de fête avec toutes les communautés’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 3.

²⁷⁴ ‘Deux jours de fête autour du Mwâ Kâ’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/09/2005, 5.

²⁷⁵ See Anne Gaignaire, ‘Des milliers de personnes fêtent le Mwâ Kâ’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 10. The name *Kamorw* itself is never actually used by LNC in its 2005 coverage. See also the discussion of this statue below.

²⁷⁶ See ‘Deux jours de fête autour du Mwâ Kâ’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/09/2005, 5; Xavier Serre, ‘Mwâ Kâ : La place du destin commun’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 2; Xavier Serre, ‘Deux jours de fête avec toutes les communautés’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 3; Anne Gaignaire, ‘Des milliers de personnes fêtent le Mwâ Kâ’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 10-11.

'chaque communauté fera sa « coutume » devant le Mwâ Kâ et prendra la parole pour exprimer sa vision du destin commun'.²⁷⁷ The 'coutume' mentioned in this passage took the form of objects chosen by the representatives of each community to best symbolise their identity to be offered to representatives of the Kanak people.²⁷⁸ This part of the event was organised broadly around the Kanak 'customary' mode of *accueil*, transposed to the level of the country as a whole. It was thus designed to enact the 'customary' *accueil* by 'the Kanak people' (represented by the *Comité 150 ans après* and, in particular, the *Sénat coutumier*)²⁷⁹ as the country's indigenous people – its metaphorical collective 'customary' '*maîtres de la terre*' – of the more recently arrived ethno-cultural groups which carried the '*barreur*' statue and spoke at this ceremony broadly in the order of their historical arrival to New Caledonia subsequent to the country's colonisation.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ Xavier Serre, 'Deux jours de fête avec toutes les communautés', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 3.

²⁷⁸ According to one caption to a photograph published with LNC's subsequent coverage of the event, '[c]haque communauté [...] a été invitée à s'exprimer et à faire don d'objets la symbolisant au mieux': Anne Gaignaire, 'Des milliers de personnes fêtent le Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 11. However, no details of the precise nature of each of these gifts were given by the newspaper. Nor did it include details in relation to or extracts from all of the speeches delivered by the numerous community and political representatives on the day. Selected extracts from all of these speeches were included in the film of the event produced subsequently by the *Comité 150 ans après* (2005).

²⁷⁹ According to LNC, the day before the main public event, exclusively Kanak '*rencontres*' were organised to allow for the '*aire Djubéa-Kaponé*' and the *Comité 150 ans après* to welcome the Kanak '*délégations de l'intérieur et des îles*' representing '*les autres aires coutumières du pays*'. Xavier Serre, 'Deux jours de fête avec toutes les communautés', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 3. This initial inter-Kanak process can be likened to those engaged respectively by the organisers of *Mélanésie 2000* and the CCT's inauguration prior to those events. In all of these three cases, such a process was necessary to enable the preliminary 'customary' welcome of certain Kanak delegations from outside the Noumea area by a group representing (or at least purporting to represent) the appropriate Kanak 'customary' authorities over the Noumea area (acting in the role of the '*maîtres de la terre*') prior to the primary public event incorporating further 'customary' exchanges during which 'the Kanak people' as a whole (or rather, a particular sub-set thereof) were to present themselves and to act together as a united and undifferentiated group. 'The Kanak people' was thus referred to by the narrator of the film of the 24 September 2005 event produced by the *Comité* as '*le peuple d'accueil*': *Comité 150 ans après* (2005).

²⁸⁰ Thus, according to LNC, the sculpture was carried successively by groups representing the following communities in this order: '*les Kanak, les Européens-pionniers, les Kabyles, les Vanuatais, les Javanais, les Japonais, les Vietnamiens, les Chinois, les Wallisiens, les Tahitiens, les Malabars-Bourbonnais et les Antillais-Guyannais*.' Anne Gaignaire, 'Des milliers de personnes fêtent le Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 10. See also the film produced by the *Comité 150 ans après* on the 2005 event: *Comité 150 ans après* (2005). The representatives of each community appear most often to have

Through this adapted public enactment of a Kanak '*coutume d'accueil*', the present and future political legitimacy of the country's settler and immigrant communities to remain in New Caledonia was designed to have been founded and acknowledged. At the same time, the persisting primary political legitimacy, rights, position and role of 'the Kanak people' (represented primarily by their 'customary' political representatives in the *Sénat coutumier*) and the principle of continuing Kanak 'sovereignty' were simultaneously designed to have been acknowledged, enacted and reinforced through this ceremony. In this manner, the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative can again be understood as an attempt to found a new, cohesive socio-political order for the country in the present and the future, similar to the 'common destiny' and the new 'social contract' announced and programmed by the Noumea Accord, but firmly reconfigured and grounded in and on 'Kanak terms' and the posited primary political legitimacy of 'the Kanak people' and their 'customary' representatives in institutions such as the *Sénat coutumier*.

The understanding of the organisation and intended signification of the 2005 event as effecting the 'customary' *accueil* by 'the Kanak people' of all of the other communities now established in New Caledonia into their '*case*' (a metaphor for the country conceived as a socio-political and territorial whole) is supported by comments made in 2007 by Adèle Buama as the *Comité 150 ans après*'s '*Secrétaire et porte-parole*' at that time.²⁸¹ A similar construction of the *Mwâ Kâ* and this 2005 event's signification and intended function is also implicitly identifiable in quotations from Mandaoué and Decoiré published by LNC in the lead up to the event, although the term '*accueil*' is not expressly used.²⁸²

been members of relevant local cultural associations, but also possibly included members of the general public.

²⁸¹ Lurton (2007).

²⁸² In two articles Mandaoué is cited as maintaining that the objective of '*les Kanak*' in initiating the *Mwâ Kâ* project was, from its inception: '*ériger le poteau central d'une grande case dans laquelle toutes les communautés du territoire ont leur place.*' 'Deux jours de fête autour du *Mwâ Kâ*', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/09/2005, 5. See also Xavier Serre, '*Mwâ Kâ : La place du destin commun*', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 2. Decoiré is quoted by LNC in an article published on the 23 September 2005 as maintaining that: '*[I]e Mwâ Kâ, c'est le symbole du destin commun et il va dans le sens de l'Accord de Nouméa. C'est la maison de l'homme du pays, la nôtre mais aussi la vôtre ! Il faut donc s'arrêter un moment pour entrer, ensemble, dans cette grande case et construire un avenir*

In an article published just prior to the 24 September 2004 event, LNC had itself linked the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative to the schema of *accueil*:

*[d]ans le même esprit que l'an dernier, [...] le comité « 150 ans après » organise aujourd'hui, 24 septembre, une cérémonie coutumière, politique et culturelle autour de l'idée de destin commun et de l'accueil des autres communautés par le peuple premier de Nouvelle-Calédonie.*²⁸³

In contrast, the schema of Kanak 'customary' *accueil* was also mobilised as part of the critique of the 'customary' legitimacy of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative articulated by Ignace Païta in an article published by LI subsequent to this 2004 event.²⁸⁴

Significantly, the daily newspaper does not foreground the schema of *accueil* in its coverage of the 2005 event. Indeed, the structure and significance of this 'customary' ceremony, particularly as a means of enacting the Kanak *accueil* of the country's more recent arrivals, is not explained or foregrounded by LNC in its 2005 coverage, which tends rather to focus on the implication of all communities in carrying the new 'barreur' statue through Noumea before its installation on the cement *pirogue* alongside the *Mwâ Kâ* statue. Reference to the idea of Kanak *accueil* is only identifiable in two short citations in the daily newspaper's main coverage the event, attributed respectively to a member of the local 'European' community who was present at the event²⁸⁵ and to a representative of the local community from Wallis and Futuna who spoke during the 'customary' ceremony.²⁸⁶ These citations might indicate that the inscription of the

commun.' Xavier Serre, 'Questions à... Narcisse Decoiré, sculpteur de Saint-Louis « Un appel au changement ! »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 3. Decoiré is also cited in this article as affirming that: '[l]e 24 Septembre est aujourd'hui le jour de la citoyenneté, le jour où tout le monde entre dans la grande case.'

²⁸³ 'Le 24 septembre autour du Mwâ Ka', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/09/2004, 5.

²⁸⁴ Ignace Païta, 'Tribune libre...', *Les Infos*, no. 109, 22/10/2004, 1.

²⁸⁵ See Anne Gaignaire, 'Ils étaient là...', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 10.

²⁸⁶ See Anne Gaignaire, 'Réactions', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 10. Particularly in light of the cultural significance of such types of 'customary' ceremonies and exchanges for the local Wallisian and Futunan communities themselves, as well as the context and recent history of tension, conflict and violence between them and the Kanak community, the statements in the passage cited from the speech made by the Wallisian/Futunan representative during the 'customary' ceremonies could potentially be

ceremony and event in this Kanak mode of *accueil* was, at the very least at a superficial level, successfully conveyed to those who were present, suggesting the daily newspaper chose not to emphasise this aspect of the event rather than its potential opacity to non-Kanak (or non-Oceanian) individuals.

In its 2005 coverage, LNC continued to emphasise the inscription of the *Mwâ Kâ* in the Noumea Accord project of constructing a 'common destiny' for all of the country's ethno-cultural inhabitants, in line with its 2003 and 2004 coverage.²⁸⁷ As a consequence, the particular politics of Kanak culture and identity otherwise identifiable in the organisation of this 2005 event (including notably the attempted reformulation of the Noumea Accord's 'common destiny' on the basis of the posited primacy of the country's indigenous people, as represented by their '*coutumiers*' in local political institutions such as the *Sénat coutumier*) is largely obscured in the coverage published by the daily newspaper.

The link between the 24 September, the *Mwâ Kâ* and the Noumea Accord category of local 'citizenship' was itself also strengthened and formalised during the 2005 event when Déwé Gorodey (on behalf of the New Caledonian Government)²⁸⁸ declared the 24 September to be the official '*journée de la citoyenneté calédonienne*', to be celebrated

seen to indicate or possibly form a component of a contemporary process of reconciliation between these communities. This passage runs: '[p]ar notre geste de coutume, nous confirmons notre soumission et notre respect aux kanak qui nous ont reçus. Peuple kanak, vous nous avez invité au destin commun. Nous sommes obligés de saisir cette opportunité non pas à une main mais à deux mains pour que la pirogue parte vers le soleil. Nous voulons voir le soleil. Nous en avons besoin.' This passage indicates an understanding and acceptance of the full implications of the 'customary' mode of *accueil*, through which a new socio-political order is established in which the '*maîtres de la terre*' retain their legitimacy and place despite their conferral on those who are welcomed of a differentiated legitimacy and place. Such an understanding and acceptance is not as readily apparent in the other references to *accueil* in LNC's coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* in 2004 and 2005.

²⁸⁷ For example, the headline of a major article published just prior to the 24 September 2005 characterised the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* as the: '*place du destin commun*'. One of the lead dot-points heading this article also represented the *Mwâ Kâ* as a '*symbole du destin commun*', as well as affirming that, despite having had '*du mal à trouver sa place*', the *Mwâ Kâ* '*va réussir un bel exploit : faire du 24 septembre une fête de la citoyenneté*.' Xavier Serre, 'Mwâ Kâ : La place du destin commun', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 2.

²⁸⁸ At this time, Gorodey was both the Government's Vice-President and its member responsible for the 'Citizenship' portfolio, in addition to 'Customary Affairs', Culture and the '*Condition féminine*'.

each year around the *Mwâ Kâ*.²⁸⁹ Moreover, the last element of the ‘customary’ ceremony held during the event appears to have involved the installation of the new ‘barreur’ statue in its permanent position at one end of the cement *pirogue* by representatives of the country’s political institutions,²⁹⁰ to whom the responsibility for the newly inaugurated *Place du Mwâ Kâ*, for organising the future celebrations of the 24 September and so, effectively, for the continuation of the *Mwâ Kâ* project was conferred by the *Comité 150 ans après*.²⁹¹

The Preamble of the Noumea Accord expressly identifies the creation of New Caledonian ‘citizenship’ as a fundamental component of the project of constructing a ‘*destin commun*’.²⁹²

Nevertheless, LNC rarely foregrounded or even mentioned this idea or category of local ‘citizenship’ in its coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in 2003 and 2004, seeming to prefer the less problematic idea of the ‘*destin commun*’ in its constructions of the *Mwâ Kâ*’s signification. In 2005, the official designation of the 24 September anniversary as ‘Citizenship Day’ resulted in an increase in the prominence of this category of ‘citizenship’ in the daily newspaper’s coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* event.

While LNC still presents itself as broadly favourable to the socio-political project embodied in the Noumea Accord and the *Mwâ Kâ*, in contrast to its 2003 and 2004 coverage, a series of qualifications are made by the newspaper in 2005 in relation to the

²⁸⁹ Anne Gaignaire, ‘Des milliers de personnes fêtent le Mwâ Kâ’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 10.

²⁹⁰ Xavier Serre, ‘Deux jours de fête avec toutes les communautés’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 3.

²⁹¹ However, the *Comité* appears to have continued to play a primary role in organising the various new initiatives and events around the *Mwâ Kâ* on the 24 September in subsequent years, which saw highly variable degrees of political investment and involvement until the 24 September 2009, at which point the Government of New Caledonia ‘*a souhaité [...] reprendre en main l’organisation de l’événement*’, according to LNC’s coverage: Sylvain Amiotte, ‘Une fête en construction’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2009, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

²⁹² The Preamble affirms that: ‘[i]l est aujourd’hui nécessaire de poser les bases d’une citoyenneté de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, permettant au peuple d’origine de constituer avec les hommes et les femmes qui y vivent une communauté humaine affirmant son destin commun.’ *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*, ‘Préambule’, point 4.

nature and ultimate realisation of that socio-political project. In most instances, these qualifications are identified by the newspaper as having also been articulated by members of the *Comité 150 ans après*, by political or community representatives and by members of the general public.

This element of qualification first appears at the end of the main article covering the 2005 event published on the 23 September.²⁹³ LNC's concludes that:

*[s]ouvent incompris, parfois récupéré, le Mwâ Kâ va néanmoins réussir un bel exploit, samedi. Rassembler toutes les communautés pour fêter le 24 Septembre. Jour de deuil pour les uns ou fête patriotique pour les autres : cette date va cesser d'être embarrassante pour devenir la fête du destin commun et de la citoyenneté. Reste à concrétiser ce beau rêve dans la vie de tous les jours...*²⁹⁴

This last sentence indicates the newspaper's identification of a persisting gap between, on the one hand, the inclusive discourse and socio-political project of the *Mwâ Kâ* and the Noumea Accord and, on the other, the every-day realities of social and political division within the country.

The same type of qualification and a number of problematic aspects of the 2005 *Mwâ Kâ* initiative are given substantially more prominence in the coverage published by the daily immediately after the event. One of the lead dot-points heading the main article on the event states that the decree of the 24 September as '*journée de la citoyenneté calédonienne*' is: '*[u]n pas en avant mais les difficultés n'ont pas été niées*.'²⁹⁵ This article then begins with a description of the event as an occasion of inter-ethnic interaction, communication and exchange (affirming: '*[l]'heure est à la joie de vivre ensemble*'), but goes on to ask:

²⁹³ Xavier Serre, 'Mwâ Kâ : La place du destin commun', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2005, 2.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Anne Gaignaire, 'Des milliers de personnes fêtent le Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 10.

« [e]t demain ? », s'interroge Narcisse Decoiré [...]. Et demain... Passés la fête, les discours lyriques, les idées généreuses, la question était dans toutes les têtes. « Sommes-nous prêts ? Avons-nous vaincu nos peurs, surmonté nos douleurs ? », a lancé à la foule Didier Leroux, qui représentait le gouvernement. Car les différences ne sont pas effacées comme par enchantement, comme l'a noté Jean Lèques, le maire de Nouméa.²⁹⁶

Through this selective reproduction, appropriation and amalgamation of different parts of the official speeches made during the event, the problems and doubts raised in this passage in relation to the country's future (both in reference to the concrete impact of the 2005 *Mwâ Kâ* event and, more broadly, to the evolution of the local socio-political context) are represented by LNC as being significant and widely held.²⁹⁷

Following from its account of Lèques's comments, the newspaper goes on to implicitly underline and confirm the persistence of substantial 'differences' in relation to the question of the country's future by reference to elements of Déwé Gorodey's speech. For, according to the newspaper's report, Gorodey:

*n'a pas manqué de rappeler en termes choisis que « nous sommes dans une période de transition : actuellement, c'est la période de la gouvernance partagée et on va doucement vers la sortie, là-bas. Car il y a une porte de sortie à l'Accord de Nouméa. »*²⁹⁸

By implication, the newspaper suggests that Gorodey's reference to the '*porte de sortie*' of the Noumea Accord is a reference to the accession of the country to full independence at the end of the Accord process, given Gorodey's pro-independence

²⁹⁶ Ibid. The phrase, '*L'heure est à la joie de vivre ensemble. Et demain ?*' is also reproduced in large, bold font and positioned prominently in the middle of the article's text.

²⁹⁷ Note also that, in a similar vein to the newspaper's earlier coverage, one caption to a photograph accompanying this article showing the '*barreur*' statue being carried through a Noumean street states: '*[L]e chef d'orchestre de la cérémonie veillait aux muscles des hommes qui portaient à bout de bras le barreur de la pirogue. Et c'est une chaîne d'hommes en sueur, autrefois rivaux, qui s'entraidaient dans la bonne humeur. Une jolie image en attendant qu'elle se concrétise dans la réalité quotidienne.*' Anne Gaignaire, 'Des milliers de personnes fêtent le Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 11.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 10.

political stance, and this pro-independence position is in turn implicitly represented as a key point of problematic ‘difference’ in relation to the country’s future. The newspaper’s own position in opposition to independence is thus implicitly conveyed and discursively reinforced.

In the following paragraph, LNC states:

*[e]t le Mwâ Kâ est le premier signe identitaire de cette « Nouvelle-Calédonie-Kanaky » future. Sur ce point, tout le monde est d’accord : Déwé Gorodey bien sûr mais aussi Isabelle Ohlen pour le Congrès et Didier Leroux pour le gouvernement. Identitaire, car il symbolise aux yeux de tous la citoyenneté : tous les peuples de Nouvelle-Calédonie rassemblés sur une même pirogue vers le destin commun.*²⁹⁹

The textual context and phrasing of these three sentences leaves a degree of (strategic) discursive ambiguity in relation to two key points. Firstly, it is left unclear as to whether the newspaper itself considers the *Mwâ Kâ* to be the first *signe identitaire*, in line with the view attributed to Gorodey, Ohlen and Leroux. Secondly, it is unclear whether the ‘tous’ in the phrase affirming that the *Mwâ Kâ* ‘symbolise aux yeux de tous la citoyenneté’ is implicitly restricted to the political figures referred to previously or extends to include the newspaper and, indeed, all members of New Caledonian society.

In this connection, it is worth considering LNC’s previous characterisations of the *Mwâ Kâ* in 2003 and 2004. On the one hand, this newspaper was one of the very first commentators and actors in the local public sphere to identify the *Mwâ Kâ* as the

²⁹⁹ Ibid. This is further reinforced in the caption to one of the accompanying photographs of the event published by the newspaper, which affirms that, after having installed the statue of ‘le Vieux’ in its definitive position, ‘les officiels [...] se sont emparé du symbole et ont décrété le Mwâ Kâ premier signe identitaire’: *ibid.*, 11. It might also be noted that, as seen previously, the construction of the *Mwâ Kâ* as ‘notre premier signe identitaire’ had already been integrated into the political discourse of Philippe Gomès in 2004, as evidenced by his speech delivered by Christiane Gambey on the 24 September 2004 and reproduced in part or in full by LNC and LI: Henri Lepot, ‘Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2004, 3; Philippe Gomès, ‘Tribune libre...’, *Les Infos*, no. 106, 01/10/2004, 1.

country's first '*signe identitaire*'.³⁰⁰ Thus, in its coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* published on the 26 September 2003, the newspaper stated:

[o]n s'est souvent focalisé sur l'hymne et le drapeau. C'est en fait dans le bois, et de manière inattendue, qu'est sans doute né le premier signe identitaire de la Calédonie du destin commun que les partenaires ont appelé de leurs vœux.³⁰¹

On the other hand, the newspaper's coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* in 2003 and 2004 rarely contained any reference to local 'citizenship'. Rather, the newspaper tended to associate the statue's symbolism predominantly with the idea of the country's projected harmonious '*destin commun*', and to emphasise the initiative's consensual and inclusive character.

This earlier coverage can be contrasted to the coverage in 2005 particularly by reason of the latter's more qualified and problematised representations and discussions of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative. Moreover, LNC's discussion in 2005 of the *Mwâ Kâ* as being characterised by certain politicians involved in the 24 September event as both the '*premier signe identitaire*' and a symbol of local 'citizenship' can be seen to correspond to two of the initiative's most problematic areas as identified (either directly or more indirectly) by the newspaper.

As can be seen from the discussion and citations reproduced above, the identification of the *Mwâ Kâ* as the country's first '*signe identitaire*' is implicitly associated by the newspaper particularly with Déwé Gorodey's discourse, and consequently to her pro-independence political position, which is itself implicitly identified as problematic for the country's future.³⁰² LNC's coverage also includes references to comments made by the *Fondation des pionniers*³⁰³ during the official ('customary') ceremony on the 24

³⁰⁰ Henri Lepot, 'Un symbole à déchiffrer de bas en haut', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 10.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Anne Gaignaire, 'Des milliers de personnes fêtent le Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 10.

³⁰³ Ibid., 11. This group is identified by the newspaper as speaking on behalf of '*la communauté des « Caldoches », les Européens en Nouvelle-Calédonie depuis plusieurs générations*'.

September warning against the Kanak ‘monopolisation’ of the country’s ‘*signes identitaires*’. The *Fondation des pionniers* is cited as having stated:

*[e]n signe de conciliation, la Fondation a accepté de renoncer aux fêtes commémorant la prise de possession. En contrepartie, les Kanak ont renoncé à la journée de deuil. Mais la Fondation ne peut pas tout accepter. Si la communauté kanak monopolise le choix des signes identitaires, les Pionniers sauront se faire entendre.*³⁰⁴

However, LNC does not further discuss or foreground the implications of the *Fondation des pionniers*’s comments, which might tend to suggest their identification of the *Mwâ Kâ* as an overwhelmingly Kanak symbol.

In contrast, the main article published by LI in relation to the 2005 event refers expressly to the problematic and contested nature of the construction of the *Mwâ Kâ* as the ‘« *premier signe identitaire* » de la Nouvelle-Calédonie’, a construction which is identified by LI (like LNC) as having been a common theme in the speeches delivered by Didier Leroux, Isabelle Ohlen and Christiane Gambey – the three *Avenir Ensemble* politicians who officially represented the Government, the Congress and the Southern Province at the event.³⁰⁵ In this connection, LI refers to the *Mwâ Kâ* as: ‘*[u]n signe dans lequel certains Calédoniens ont bien du mal, tout de même, à se retrouver.*’³⁰⁶

This statement is also confirmed directly and indirectly by comments made in two other texts published by LI on the same page. One of these texts comprises a communiqué issued by the ‘*bureau du MPF (Mouvement pour la France)*’, a highly conservative local ‘loyalist’ political party.³⁰⁷ In its communiqué, the MPF clearly expresses its

³⁰⁴ Anne Gaignaire, ‘Réactions’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 10. A caption to one of the accompanying photographs showing members of the *Fondation des pionniers* with their symbolic items for the ‘customary’ exchange further reinforces this element of the association’s discourse, stating that the ‘*Fondation des pionniers [...] a rappelé qu’elle se ferait entendre dans le choix des signes identitaires*’: Anne Gaignaire, ‘Des milliers de personnes fêtent le Mwâ Kâ’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 11.

³⁰⁵ Thierry Squillario, ‘Le poteau qui cache la forêt’, *Les Infos*, no. 156, 30/09/2005, 2.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Le bureau du MPF (Mouvement pour la France), ‘Communiqué’, *Les Infos*, no. 156, 30/09/2005, 2.

opposition to the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative and, amongst other things, identifies the statue as ‘*un totem indépendantiste*’.³⁰⁸ The second text is an article signed by Damien Racy, who identifies himself as a ‘*Citoyen calédonien*’.³⁰⁹ Racy clearly advocates in favour of the *Mwâ Kâ* project, which he identifies as representing ‘*un message de paix*’, but states that this signification of the *poteau*, ‘*n’est pas complètement claire pour tout le monde*’.³¹⁰ Indeed, Racy maintains that:

*certain, trop nombreux, refusent le geste. Pour les uns le geste est profondément kanak et certains Européens ne s’y reconnaissent pas. Mais pour d’autres, ce geste n’est pas authentiquement kanak, et certains Kanak refusent de s’y associer.*³¹¹

The contested nature of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative within the Kanak community itself affirmed by Racy in this passage is generally not discussed in the reports on the *Mwâ Kâ* written by journalists of LNC and LI and published in 2003, 2004 and 2005. However, criticism of the *Mwâ Kâ* as not being ‘*authentiquement kanak*’ is a central theme of texts published by LI written by Ignace Païta (in 2004 and 2005)³¹² and by Jean Guiart (in 2005).³¹³

Nevertheless, regardless of this type of criticism, the *Mwâ Kâ* can still be identified as representing a strong symbol and, indeed, *revendication* of Kanak identity and of the primary position, role and legitimacy claimed by ‘the Kanak people’ (as represented by their ‘customary’ representatives in the *Sénat coutumier*) in relation to the country’s socio-political future. Moreover, the shadows cast implicitly in LNC’s 2005 coverage over the characterisation of the *Mwâ Kâ* as the country’s first ‘*signe identitaire*’ can be

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Damien Racy, ‘Refuser la main tendue ce 24 septembre 2005 est une excellente solution pour relancer la guerre’, *Les Infos*, no. 156, 30/09/2005, 2.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ignace Païta, ‘Tribune libre...’, *Les Infos*, no. 105, 24/09/2004, 1; Ignace Païta, ‘Tribune libre...’, *Les Infos*, no. 109, 22/10/2004, 1; Djumwâ Ignace Païta, ‘Sénat coutumier ? Du fait...’, *Les Infos*, no. 155, 23/09/2005, 3.

³¹³ Jean Guiart, ‘Le mwâka : une aventure ambiguë’, *Les Infos*, no. 157, 07/10/2005, 4.

seen to correspond to certain tensions identifiable within the terms of the Noumea Accord itself, associated with the nature of the country's future '*signes identitaires*' themselves and with the nature of the relationship between those '*signes identitaires*', the category of local 'citizenship' and the ultimate question of sovereignty over the country. In particular, the problematic nature of the identification of the *Mwâ Kâ*, a strong symbol of the Kanak people and Kanak identity, as the country's first '*signe identitaire*' reflects the tension within the Accord stemming from its recognition and prioritisation of 'Kanak identity' (built on the recognition of 'the Kanak people' as a distinct, indigenous and colonised group), on the one hand, while simultaneously constructing a new category of local 'citizenship' (prefiguring a potential future 'nationality') predicated on the principle of equality between all (qualifying) individuals regardless of ethnicity, on the other.³¹⁴

In this connection it is important to highlight the symbolism of the new '*barreur*' statue added to the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* in 2005. Neither LNC nor LI discuss the symbolism of this statue, beyond its identification in LNC as the '*barreur de la pirogue du Mwâ Kâ (appelé le « Vieux »)*',³¹⁵ who is thus to symbolically guide the *pirogue* (as a metaphor for the country with all of its ethno-cultural communities) towards the chosen destination: the '*destin commun*' advanced by the Noumea Accord.³¹⁶ This statue takes the form of a Kanak man holding an oar.³¹⁷ The statue's Kanak name, '*Kamorw*', is

³¹⁴ See the discussion in the Introduction and Annex 15.

³¹⁵ Xavier Serre, 'Deux jours de fête avec toutes les communautés', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 23/09/2005, 3.

³¹⁶ This same construction of the symbolism of the new statue is also expressed by the narrator of the film produced by the *Comité 150 ans après* on the 24 September 2005 event: *Comité 150 ans après* (2005).

³¹⁷ The ethnicity and gender of this figure is identifiable through several aspects of the carving, particularly its facial features and hair, as well as its 'traditional' Kanak attire (comprised primarily of a *bagayou*, a woven bag and a headpiece which was also adorned with an aigrette of feathers for the event held on the 24 September 2005). Guiart goes further, identifying the statue as a portrait of a living Kanak man: Jean Guiart, 'Le mwâka : une aventure ambiguë', *Les Infos*, no. 157, 07/10/2005, 4.

carved on its base along with its meaning in French, '*l'homme vivant*'.³¹⁸ The statute is consequently represented as symbolising a universal figure.³¹⁹

However, the statue's physical form as a Kanak man can still be seen to reinforce the predominance of the Kanak people and Kanak identity as the primary referents of the symbolically saturated *Place du Mwâ Kâ*.³²⁰ Moreover, the political implications of this statue's particular identity are clear, given that it represents the '*barreur*' (symbolising the appropriate and legitimate human agent) whose role is to guide the '*pirogue*' (the whole country as a '*corps social*') on a path chosen by the '*barreur*' to a future destination (that is, the shared and harmonious socio-political 'common destiny'). Through the addition of this Kanak man as the '*barreur*' of the *Mwâ Kâ pirogue*, the socio-political legitimacy of the primary position, rights, role and agency of the Kanak people and their 'customary' representatives can be seen to be symbolically reinforced,³²¹ highlighting and emphasising the tensions inherent in the *Mwâ Kâ*

³¹⁸ This was also confirmed by Adèle Buama in 2007 in the *Palabre coutumier* article cited previously, although the Kanak name is given a different orthography in this text: '*Kamoru*'. Lurton (2007: 86).

³¹⁹ This name does not appear in the 2005 coverage published by LNC in either its original or translated form. Rather, the newspaper refers exclusively to the statue as either the '*barreur*' or '*le Vieux*'. The film produced by the *Comité 150 ans après* in relation to the 2005 event includes two extracts from official speeches made during the day's ceremony in which the symbolism of the new statue is directly addressed and its purported 'universality' emphasised. See Christiane Gambey and Narcisse Decoiré in *Comité 150 ans après* (2005). Significantly, this film does not include any extracts from the relevant section of the *Fondation des pionniers*'s speech in which they warn of the Kanak 'monopolisation' of the country's '*signes identitaires*'.

³²⁰ Note that almost all of the further additions (many of which have been sculptures) which have been made to the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* from 2006 can be seen to reinforce and render more explicit its character as a Kanak symbol and, in many instances, its association with the local support for and *revendication* of indigenous rights.

³²¹ Furthermore, the gendered nature of the '*Kamoru*' statue is also significant. For, while it is possible to extend the statue's purported representation of '*l'homme universel*' to the representation of all people regardless of gender, in the particular context of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative the specifically male gender of the statue does not appear entirely inconsequential. In the first instance, the addition of the male '*barreur*' statue can be seen to reinforce the male-dominated symbolism of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue itself (each of the *Mwâ Kâ*'s sections representing the *aires coutumières* contain one or more human or part-human figures, all of which are identifiable men; and the symbolism of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue as a *poteau central*, itself a physically phallic structure/object, is associated with key, specifically male figures at the apex of the Kanak 'customary' socio-political structure – the *frère aîné* and the *chef*). Moreover, both the *Mwâ Kâ* and the '*barreur*' statue can be seen to assert and reinforce the primary legitimacy and role of the contemporary official Kanak 'customary' authorities as political actors. The male-dominated symbolism of these statues might consequently be viewed as a means of symbolically reinforcing the purported legitimacy of the exclusively male membership of those contemporary 'customary' authorities. The

initiative and its discursive construction by the *Comité 150 ans après* and by politicians involved in the 24 September 2005 event as both the country's first '*signe identitaire*' and a symbol of the Noumea Accord category of local 'citizenship'.

LNC itself raises questions in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ*'s symbolism and the 24 September 2005 event as inclusive of all local 'citizens' in its main article covering the event, the conclusion of which states that, despite the '*foule œcuménique rassemblée pour dire son espoir dans le destin commun*' on the 24 September 2005, '*chacun reste sur ses gardes. Et plus encore les métropolitains, oubliés de la fête, même quand ils remplissent depuis longtemps les critères de la citoyenneté.*'³²² The purported exclusion of the local '*métropolitain*' community in the 2005 event is identified and reinforced on two further occasions by LNC in its coverage.³²³

This purported exclusion is represented by the newspaper as an indication of significant problems specific to the 2005 *Mwâ Kâ* and 'Citizenship Day' event itself, as well as being reflective of broader social and political issues facing the country in the present and the future.³²⁴ This aspect of the daily newspaper's coverage of the 24 September 2005 can itself be seen to correlate to the increasingly heated controversy surrounding certain key elements of the Noumea Accord and its application, including particularly

dominant role of men within the 'traditional' patriarchal Kanak political structure and hierarchy is today used to justify and legitimate the current exclusion of women from the country's *Sénat coutumier* and *Conseils coutumiers*, despite the arguments raised by some Kanak women (including notably Déwé Gorodey) that these bodies are not 'customary' institutions, but rather institutions created under French law, and that they should consequently not exclude women. The male-dominated symbolism of the *Mwâ Kâ* and the '*Kamorw*' statues thus appears to belie their purportedly inclusive, or even 'universal' character as symbols of the Kanak people and/or of the country (with all of its established inhabitants) in their entirety.

³²² Anne Gaignaire, 'Des milliers de personnes fêtent le Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/09/2005, 10. This exclusion can be contrasted to the apparent inclusion of this group in the 2004 event: according to LNC's report at that time, a child representing the local '*métropolitain*' community was included in the eight pairs of children who together symbolically replaced the mini-*flèches* on the *Mwâ Kâ* statue's flanks. Henri Lepot, 'Un 24 Septembre sous le signe du Mwâ Ka', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 25/09/2004, 2.

³²³ See Anne Gaignaire, 'Ils étaient là...', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/09/2005, 10; Anne Gaignaire, 'Repères', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/09/2005, 11.

³²⁴ See Anne Gaignaire, 'Ils étaient là...', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/09/2005, 10; Anne Gaignaire, 'Repères', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/09/2005, 11.

the precise nature of its restrictions on the right of certain people living in New Caledonia to vote in local elections, and therefore the legal definition of the category of local 'citizenship' created by the Accord.³²⁵

This '*corps électoral*' issue was already a key point of local controversy and tension in 2003 at the time of Jacques Chirac's visit to New Caledonia and the initiation of the *Mwâ Kâ* project.³²⁶ In 2005, the issue was still unresolved and was gaining in salience as a key flash-point of social, political and legal conflict, mobilisation and manoeuvring, particularly locally in New Caledonia but also increasingly in Metropolitan France.³²⁷ In this broader context, the declaration by the pro-independence Vice-President of the New Caledonian Government, Déwé Gorodey, of the 24 September as local 'Citizenship Day' to be celebrated each year at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* can be seen to take on a particular, highly politically charged, fraught and contested complexion. LNC's indication of certain qualifications, doubts and problems (particularly in emphasising the purported exclusion of the country's established '*métropolitain*' community) in relation to the symbolism and realisation of the *Mwâ Kâ*, the 24 September 2005 event

³²⁵ This question of voting rights was a central focus of the formal discussions between '*indépendantistes*', '*loyalistes*' and the French State as early as 1983 at the Nainville-les-Roches round table. The restriction of those eligible to vote in referendums and/or certain local elections was also an integral component of the peace agreements reached in 1988 and in 1998, enshrined respectively in the Matignon Accords and the Noumea Accord. However, due to some ambiguity in the terms of the *Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie* which enacted the 1998 Noumea Accord, two interpretations were possible of the agreed restriction on the electorate eligible to participate in the election of the three Provincial Assemblies and the New Caledonian Congress. A condition of 10 years residence in New Caledonia was imposed on this electorate, but it was unclear whether this was 'fixed', and so restricted to the voters meeting this condition in 1998 (the Noumea Accord's pro-independence signatories maintained consistently that this is what had originally been agreed), or 'sliding' (as argued by its 'loyalist' signatories), with more recent arrivals progressively being incorporated into the electorate for the provincial elections, although in reality this would only have altered the electorates for the 2009 and 2014 elections. No such ambiguity existed in relation to the definition of the electorate eligible to participate in the referendum(s) on the country's accession to full sovereignty that can be held from 2014 – this electorate was clearly restricted in the original terms of the *Loi organique* to those eligible to vote in the 1998 referendum. Similarly, all French nationals in New Caledonia could clearly still vote in national, European and municipal elections according to the normal conditions stipulated in French law.

³²⁶ See the discussion in Annex 11.

³²⁷ The issue of the '*corps électoral*' was definitively resolved in February 2007, when the Congress of the French Parliament amended the French Constitution so as to define the relevant condition to vote of 10 years residence at these particular New Caledonian elections as being 'fixed', as at 1998.

and the associated socio-political project can consequently be seen to echo these prevailing issues of contention in the broader socio-political context of the time.

In contrast to LNC's coverage, the explicit and implicit inscription and implication of the 2005 *Mwâ Kâ* event in the sphere of local politics, particularly given the contestation and uncertainty surrounding the Noumea Accord category of 'citizenship' at this time, is the primary focus of the principal article published by LI covering the inauguration of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*.³²⁸ LI maintains in this article that, beyond the '*discours purement politiques*' articulated by various official representatives during the event:

*il faut nécessairement se pencher sur la citoyenneté déclamée et appropriée au travers de cette manifestation. La citoyenneté calédonienne, si elle est effectivement inscrite dans l'Accord de Nouméa, n'est pas encore officiellement effective dans la vie de tous les jours. Ses contours restent à définir. Il est donc bien délicat, dans ce flou juridique, de décréter cette citoyenneté et de s'en arroger la paternité. Nous touchons là aux limites de cette cérémonie, culturellement citoyenne peut-être, mais politiquement incorrecte.*³²⁹

The distinction constructed at the end of this passage between the 'cultural' and the 'political' can also be seen to inform the paper's broader analysis of the changing nature of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative since 2003. However, in this analysis, the *Mwâ Kâ* is represented as having progressively become less 'cultural' and more 'political', being an '*initiative d'abord culturelle qui s'est finalement politisée pour devenir une affaire d'Etat. En l'occurrence une affaire citoyenne, qui est loin d'avoir fait l'unanimité.*'³³⁰ LI maintains that, as a consequence, and despite the large crowds and the participation of '*pratiquement toutes les communautés vivant en Nouvelle-Calédonie*' on the 24

³²⁸ Thierry Squillario, 'Le poteau qui cache la forêt', *Les Infos*, no. 156, 30/09/2005, 2.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid.

September 2005, this event nevertheless overwhelmingly engendered: ‘[e]normément d’incompréhension’.³³¹

LI goes on to highlight the fact that the event was not supported by a number of local political parties, and presents a highly critical analysis of the posited reasons behind the particular positioning of various politicians in relation to the event.³³² The paper focuses especially on its political absentees (particularly Harold Martin), as well as its attendees (particularly Didier Leroux), identifying a large degree of electioneering and/or political opportunism in their (imputed or expressed) respective positions.³³³ Furthermore, LI affirms that: ‘certains initiateurs culturels – Georges Mandaoué et Raphaël Mapou – de cette manifestation ont visiblement des ambitions politiques’.³³⁴ The headline of LI’s article on the inauguration of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* consequently refers to ‘[l]e poteau qui cache la forêt’, and the lead paragraph suggests that, despite the event’s ‘atmosphère festive, de nombreuses interrogations demeurent sur la réelle portée de cette manifestation.’³³⁵

While, as seen above, certain issues are also raised in relation to the 2005 *Mwâ Kâ* event in the coverage published by LNC, the daily does not include any explanation or commentary on the absence of various key officials, political representatives and parties.³³⁶ Moreover, unlike LI’s explicit critique of different politicians’ involvement (or otherwise) in the 2005 event, the only critical element of LNC’s coverage in relation to this political involvement was the newspaper’s implicit suggestion concerning the

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Anne Gaignaire, ‘Repères’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 11. The relevant passage of this text, headed ‘[L]es grands absents’, notes that, while the Congress, the Government and the Southern and Islands Provinces were officially represented, none of the Presidents of these institutions were present. It also affirms that the *Rassemblement-UMP* did not officially participate, and that the ‘indépendantiste’ Charles Pidjot was the only politician to have spoken as a signatory to the Noumea Accord.

pro-independence subtext of Déwé Gorodey's discourse.³³⁷ Nor does the daily criticise or question the motives and discourse of the *Comité 150 ans après*, the position of which the newspaper tends rather to support and appropriate, as in 2003 and 2004. Nevertheless, the increased political (in the sense relating to political parties and elected politicians) engagement in the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative by local politicians and parties is apparent in the coverage of both LNC and LI by reason of the numerous reports and reproductions of communiqués and letters on this subject published therein.³³⁸

‘Citizenship Day’ and the *Mwâ Kâ* in subsequent years

As potentially foreshadowed by the local print-media coverage of the event in 2005, the symbolism and significance of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue, the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*, and the 24 September ‘Citizenship Day’ events organised in subsequent years have remained the subject of considerable public and political controversy and contestation, at the same time as seeming to elicit a certain degree of apathy, if not indifference, in many members of the general New Caledonian public in Noumea and beyond. This is largely confirmed in the ambivalence and the increasingly negative perspectives expressed in the coverage of the subsequent ‘Citizenship Day’ events organised at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* published in the local written press, coverage which is also given considerably less prominence in comparison to 2003, 2004 and 2005. The partisan political inscription of the *Mwâ Kâ* and associated events, represented as increasingly socially and politically

³³⁷ Anne Gaignaire, ‘Des milliers de personnes fêtent le Mwâ Kâ’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 10. See the discussion above.

³³⁸ These communiqués and letters, advocating or opposing the *Mwâ Kâ* project and the 2005 event, were authored by various political parties, community associations or groups, and individuals, positioning themselves explicitly in specific ways in relation to the local contemporary socio-political context. These types of texts had been entirely absent from the pages of LNC in 2003 and 2004. They were also considerably less prevalent in LI in 2003 and, to a lesser extent, in 2004.

marginal and contested rather than inclusive and consensual, has been a prominent theme in the press coverage since 2006, including that published by LNC.³³⁹

Thus, despite the Kanak ‘customary’ *accueil* of the country’s more recent arrivals enacted on the 24 September 2005, the success of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in advancing or realising its socio-political objectives (both those expressed publically by its organisers and those implicit in their discourse and actions) appears similarly to have remained highly ambivalent. This can in large measure be attributed to the inherent tensions within those objectives as they were articulated and pursued by the initiative’s organisers, and to the multiplicity of often ambiguous and contradictory discursive appropriations and rearticulations of the initiative in the public domain by various actors pursuing divergent political agendas, as illustrated by the local written press coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* from 2003 to 2005.

³³⁹ Some of this subsequent coverage is discussed in Annexes 13 and 15. A slightly more positive (if still qualified and tentative) appraisal of the event appears in LNC’s coverage of the event in 2009. The developments since 2010 are discussed in Annex 15.

CONCLUSION

The persisting resistance of the New Caledonian written press to the radical political implications of Kanak (indigenous) culture and identity

The thirty years from 1975 to 2005 have seen significant transformations affecting all aspects of New Caledonian society. This period saw the emergence of Kanak culture (and identity) as a distinct sphere of socio-political action and engagement, informed not only by the development of the Kanak independence movement and the *revendication* of indigenous rights in New Caledonia, but also by the attempted neutralisation of that movement and its *revendications*. *Mélanésie 2000* in 1975, the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou* and its inauguration in 1998, and the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative from 2003 to 2005 were all oriented towards promoting certain significant socio-political changes within New Caledonian society as a whole. These changes were connected to the promotion and ‘restitution’ of Kanak culture and identity, Kanak indigeneity and sovereignty, and the persisting political primacy of Kanak agency and legitimacy. Nevertheless, all three events were inscribed in a discourse of openness in relation to the country’s established non-Kanak communities.

The critical analysis presented in this thesis of the discursive representations in the predominantly ‘non-Kanak’ local written press of these three Kanak-organised ‘cultural’ events demonstrates the latter’s complex and contested nature, both within and beyond the Kanak community, particularly in terms of their political implications and objectives. It also demonstrates the way in which certain discursive strategies can have ambivalent political effects, and have often been mobilised for highly divergent political ends. The rich findings produced by this analysis attest to the value of the methodology adopted and its particular synthesis of a Foucauldian perspective with the applied approaches to the critical analysis of print-media discourse elaborated by authors such as Roger Fowler and Norman Fairclough.

In 1975, the *Mélanésie 2000* festival implicitly articulated a transformative politics of Kanak culture and identity. The festival’s *jeu scénique* called for the radical reconfiguration (and decolonisation) of the established socio-political order through the

restitution to the Kanak people of their '*droit d'accueil*' as the country's indigenous people (effectively representing the restitution of Kanak sovereignty) and the institution of a new symbolic and material '*partage des ignames*' between Kanak and non-Kanak communities in New Caledonia. However, the dominant, 'mainstream' and conservative press can be seen in its contemporaneous coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* to have mobilised a number of discursive strategies which worked to occlude and foreclose this transformative politics of Kanak culture and identity.

In these 'mainstream' and conservative newspapers the country's colonial past and its continuing impact were discursively neutralised through the construction of a radical disjuncture between that past, on the one hand, and the present and the future, on the other. No special character or privileged position was acknowledged as attaching to Kanak people, culture and identity as indigenous to the country. The political significance of the Kanak 'customary' inscription of the festival's organisation and ultimate political message were not acknowledged – indeed, Kanak 'custom' was itself generally constructed as cultural rather than political in character. Kanak agency in relation to the festival's transformative political message was discursively occluded through the attribution of responsibility (and culpability) for the 'dissentient', political elements of the festival to the Metropolitan–French specialists hired by the event's Kanak organisers. Overall, the festival project was discursively constructed by the mainstream, conservative local press as an essentially a-political, Kanak event of minimal broader significance. It was represented as entirely congruent with and confirmatory of the posited social 'consensus' and socio-political status quo in contemporary French New Caledonia.

The socio-political context in 1998 was very different to that in 1975, a difference reflected in several aspects of the local written press coverage of the CCT and its inauguration. The CCT project, inscribed in the political context and framework of the Matignon Accords, was largely Kanak focused and can in certain respects be characterised as a Kanak nationalist project. On the other hand, the significant involvement of the French State and certain prominent aspects of the project (such as its world-class international modernist architecture) suggest its simultaneous inscription in a French nationalist agenda.

In 1998, the majority of local newspapers emphasised Piano's architecture and agency in relation to the CCT as a building project, as well as foregrounding the presence and agency of French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin in relation to the Centre's inauguration. This tended to align the CCT project's political implications and significance implicitly with French, rather than Kanak, nationalist orientations, and consequently with the perpetuation of French New Caledonia. In the only mass-distribution local daily newspaper at this time, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, this was most directly expressed in an editorial published on the day of the CCT's inauguration in which the Centre and the signing of the Noumea Accord were both represented as symbols enshrining French Republican values and furthering the project of constructing a so-called '*France exemplaire*', through which France was projected to become an international leader. The preeminent local 'loyalist' politician, Jacques Lafleur, articulated a complimentary perspective in relation to the CCT at the time of its inauguration: Lafleur is reported in the local press as having affirmed the Centre's inscription in a regional '*francophonie*' project and emphasised the important role of the French language in facilitating 'external' access to Kanak culture. In this manner, Lafleur's discourse overlaid and potentially subsumed the politics of Kanak culture and identity engaged through the CCT project within an international politics of French culture and identity.

On the other hand, the discursive inscription of the CCT in a French nationalist agenda was both less explicit and less 'hegemonic' in LNC's broader contemporaneous coverage of the Centre's inauguration. This coverage not only included a range of voices and discourses from various sources articulated during or in relation to the event, but also tended to emphasise the political significance and symbolism of the inauguration in terms of the local implications of the Noumea Accord. Indeed, the CCT was predominantly represented by the daily newspaper as an open and inclusive local symbol and an institution reflective of the socio-political project of the Noumea Accord. This perspective was itself largely echoed in the public speeches made during the inauguration as they were reported in the press, but inflected (particularly in the case of Lafleur and Wamytan) by differing initial strategic appropriations of the Noumea Accord and divergent constructions of its ultimate significance.

As had been the case in its 1975 coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*, LNC's coverage of the CCT's inauguration in 1998 can be seen to have associated Kanak 'custom' predominantly with 'culture', and failed to recognise it as a legitimate and effective

mode of political action. Thus, the newspaper's coverage discursively neutralised the potential political significance of the Kanak 'customary' inscription of the CCT project and its inauguration (which worked to establish the Centre's physical, political and institutional legitimacy on a federated Kanak 'customary' basis; to make Kanak people the primary collective agents of the inauguration and the CCT project as a whole; and to affirm principles of Kanak sovereignty). Moreover, to the limited extent to which the centrality of Kanak 'customary' agency in relation to the CCT's inauguration was recognised by the newspaper, this recognition was largely counteracted by the predominant emphasis placed by LNC on the political inscription of the event, particularly associated with the presence and role of political representatives such as Lionel Jospin.

While Kanak consensus and unity were generally posited in the local written press coverage of the CCT and its inauguration, a small number of criticisms expressed by Kanak individuals were reported therein which denounced the purportedly politically partisan (and so non-inclusive) and culturally 'inauthentic' or 'folkloric' character of the inauguration. Such issues had also been central to a number of the radical Kanak and local 'European' criticisms articulated in relation to *Mélanésie 2000* in 1975, given voice in the local print media primarily by the small-scale (and relatively marginal) 'radical' paper, *Les Calédoniens*. In 1998, despite the ADCK's attempt to promote a dynamic conception of Kanak culture and identity through the CCT (in line with the position originally advanced by Tjibaou in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*), underlying categories such as 'authentic' and its binary opposite, 'inauthentic', can still be seen to have largely informed the discursive representation of the CCT and its inauguration in the local written press, suggesting the persisting strategic currency of such discursive constructions.

Inscribed in the political context and dynamic of the Matignon Accords and constituting a means of giving concrete effect to the official recognition and valorisation of Kanak culture and identity, the CCT project had a predominantly Kanak focus. Moreover, in this initial political context, the question of local non-Kanak involvement in the CCT project was not a salient issue. However, in the new context heralded by the signing of the Noumea Accord in 1998, this persisting Kanak focus produced certain tensions, particularly given the predominant discursive inscription of the CCT and its inauguration in the locally inclusive dynamic of the Noumea Accord and its project of

constructing a 'common destiny' to be shared by all of the country's communities. The tensions surrounding the representational politics of the CCT as a predominantly Kanak, indigenous-centred institution in the context of New Caledonia's contemporary multi-ethnic society at the particular political juncture constituted by the signing of the Noumea Accord were largely left latent in LNC's coverage of the CCT's inauguration. Some indication of local sensitivity to these issues is, however, apparent from the coverage published in other local papers, particularly including the RPCR-controlled *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*.

Five years later, the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative organised to mark the 150th anniversary of French colonisation was also discursively inscribed by its organisers in the dynamic and socio-political project of the Noumea Accord. However, unlike the CCT and its inauguration in 1998, or, indeed, the *Mélanésie 2000* festival in 1975, the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative aimed to include the active participation of New Caledonia's established non-Kanak communities as well as that of the country's indigenous people. In 2005, this community participation culminated in an event which incorporated a ceremony designed to realise the 'customary' *accueil* by 'the Kanak people' (represented by the contemporary official 'customary' institutions, the *Sénat coutumier* and the *Conseils coutumiers*) of the country's non-Kanak communities, in the order of their arrival subsequent to colonisation. This was represented as a means of concretely realising the grass-roots process of inter-group reconciliation and the construction of a shared future and 'common destiny', initiated at the political level by the signing of the Noumea Accord. In doing so, the *Mwâ Kâ* effectively called for the acknowledgement and restitution of the continuing primacy and, indeed, sovereignty of the Kanak people (represented by their contemporary 'customary' institutions). The initiative can be seen to have worked to realise a rearticulation of the country's socio-political order, the 'common destiny' project, and the scope and meaning of local 'citizenship', on 'Kanak

terms' – that is, on the basis of a particular formulation of indigenous sovereignty and special rights.¹

However, despite the prominent and generally positive coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative published by LNC in 2003, 2004 and 2005, a number of aspects of that coverage can be seen to deflect or neutralise the key transformative elements of the politics of Kanak culture and identity engaged through the initiative by its organisers, particularly those elements which aimed to take it beyond the Noumea Accord, narrowly defined.

In reporting in 2003 on the 150th anniversary of New Caledonia's '*prise de possession*' by France, the newspaper's main article identified a '*métis*' family as 'perfectly symbolising' the 'new era' announced by the Noumea Accord and as epitomising the construction of the country's 'common destiny'. In this manner, LNC represented the country's projected future 'common destiny' as being brought about 'naturally' through the biological and cultural '*métissage*' of local identities, rather than through political action and change to the country's constitutional relationship to France. Political intervention and change were effectively de-legitimised and the perpetuation of the current status quo was reinforced by this discourse.

Furthermore, in its 2003 coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* itself, the daily newspaper emphasised and positively appraised the initiative's purported inscription in the consensual and inclusive Noumea Accord dynamic, despite the predominance of Kanak participation in the event. LNC also downplayed the 'customary' ceremonies associated with the event so as to avoid its appearance as primarily or exclusively Kanak. The newspaper's coverage might consequently be seen to have tended to obscure the centrality of the event's Kanak involvement, and its socio-political implications beyond a narrow construction of the Noumea Accord framework.

¹ It is important to recall that the particular formulation of this project and the associated construction of Kanak unity and legitimate Kanak 'customary' representation were not uncontested within the Kanak community itself, and were geared towards furthering the interests of certain individuals and groups within that community (including notably those invested in or associated with the currently recognised 'customary' institutions).

In 2005, the daily newspaper's coverage of the event organised around the *Mwâ Kâ* did not foreground or explain the inherently political significance of the 'customary' ceremony modelled on the schema of Kanak *accueil*. LNC tended rather to focus on the equal implication of all communities in carrying the new '*barreur*' statue and continued to emphasise the inscription of the *Mwâ Kâ* in the Noumea Accord project of constructing a 'common destiny' for all. Consequently, as had been the case for the 2004 representations of the *Mwâ Kâ* as symbolising '*la main tendue du peuple kanak aux autres communautés*', LNC's coverage in 2005 tended to occlude the nature and significance of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative as an attempt to realise a process of inter-group reconciliation and to establish a reformulated socio-political cohesion and order, founded on the respect of *differentiated* but coexisting legitimacies, rights and roles of both the country's indigenous people (and their 'customary' political representatives) and its non-indigenous communities.

In 1975, LNC's coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* neutralised the radical and transformative political meaning of the Kanak *accueil* of the country's colonisers depicted in the last *tableau* of the *jeu scénique*. This was achieved through the discursive occlusion of Kanak indigeneity and the '*fait colonial*', with its negative impacts on the indigenous people continuing into the present, as well as through the failure to acknowledge the political implications of the 'customary' mode of *accueil* itself. Consequently, this *accueil* was represented as affirming and projecting the continuation of a purportedly harmonious, 'fraternal' present into the future. As stated by Fote Trolue in relation to the politics of Kanak culture in the New Caledonian context, '*[q]uand on regarde au niveau de l'histoire de la culture kanak elle a toujours été une culture d'accueil*', but, separated from its political meaning, content and implications, this '*ouverture [...]* *n'aura que des conséquences perverses.*'² The local print-media coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative might be identified as another example in which the Kanak *accueil* of and openness towards the country's more recent arrivals, divorced from its initial, intended political signification and modalities, is given a different and in certain key respects

² Troule and Caihe (1995: 162).

antithetical political meaning as the confirmation of a purportedly ‘fraternal’ and shared present and future in which all individuals and groups in New Caledonia are on an equal footing.³

This conclusion is supported by the tensions within and the potential discursive effects of the construction of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative as being designed to realise the simultaneous collective ‘*enterrement*’ of the country’s colonial past and re-orientation towards the construction of a shared future or ‘common destiny’, inclusive of all of the country’s ‘citizens’. The associated discursive demarcation of the category of ‘the past’ from those of ‘the present’ and ‘the future’ can be interpreted in a number of ways with very different socio-political implications. As illustrated by Lafleur’s discursive appropriation and rearticulation of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in 2003, which effectively echoed LNC’s approach to *Mélanésie 2000*’s *jeu scénique* in 1975, this temporal demarcation can work to undermine the very historical foundation legitimising Kanak claims to a special position in the present and the future and the associated calls for the transformation of the established status quo.

The tension within the Noumea Accord itself between, on the one hand, recognising ‘Kanak identity’ as paramount and, on the other, the posited equality between all of the country’s established inhabitants qualifying as local ‘citizens’ is echoed in both the CCT and the *Mwâ Kâ*. While, in 1998, this tension was left largely latent in the local print-media coverage of the CCT’s inauguration, it was highlighted by papers other than LNC in their coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative from 2003, and acknowledged and emphasised increasingly from 2005 by the daily newspaper. This trend echoed the increasing local controversy and contestation, particularly from within the ‘loyalist’ political camp, surrounding certain key elements of the Noumea Accord, including the legal definition of the ‘citizenship’ category (linked to local voting rights) and the designation of the country’s ‘*signes identitaires*’.

³ Note also the analysis of Lafleur’s construction of New Caledonia as a ‘*pays d’accueil*’ in relation to the 2000 Festival of Pacific Arts in Annex 9.

While the voting rights question in the Noumea Accord context was definitively resolved in February 2007 with the ‘gel’ of the ‘*corps électoral*’, local ‘citizenship’ remains contentious and relatively intangible as a social reality in New Caledonia. Similarly, while the selection of three of the five ‘*signes identitaires*’ (the country’s anthem, motto and bank note designs) was legally enacted in August 2010,⁴ the last two ‘*signes identitaires*’ (the country’s flag and name) remain hotly contested. As demonstrated by the central implication of the choice of local flag in the discourses articulated publically in relation to the political turmoil in New Caledonia in 2011,⁵ political and popular contestation regarding the designation of the last two ‘*signes identitaires*’ has the potential to become a locus of serious local conflict.

At stake in the designation of the country’s flag and name is not simply the symbolic representation of the country’s future constitution, but also the expression of a collective commitment to and peaceful acceptance of that future, particularly in terms of relations between the country’s indigenous and non-indigenous communities and the possibility of an emerging shared collective identity and legitimacy. Many of the same issues and persisting tensions also lie at the heart of the present uncertainties associated with the future of both the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou*, as it prepares for its transfer to the New Caledonian Government in 2012, and the annual ‘Citizenship Day’ event organised at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*.⁶

However, open, meaningful and respectful dialogue and exchange in the political and public domains on these central socio-political questions have generally remained elusive and, as seen in the analysis presented in this thesis, have often been discursively appropriated for particular ends by the local print media in New Caledonia. This thesis effectively demonstrates that, in its coverage of the three events studied, the predominantly conservative, anti-independence and ‘non-Kanak’ local written press

⁴ See the discussion in Annex 15.

⁵ This is also discussed in Annex 15.

⁶ These uncertainties and the ‘Citizenship Day’ events organised in 2010 and 2011 (which were implicated in the political issue of the country’s flag) are discussed in Annex 15.

(particularly the local daily newspapers) has mobilised a range of discursive strategies geared towards broadly legitimising and perpetuating the contemporaneous status quo.

On the other hand, the analysis also shows that the established status quo accepted as such and supported by the dominant organs of the local written press has itself shifted significantly in the thirty-year period from 1975 to 2005. A comparison between the coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*, on the one hand, and the CCT and the *Mwâ Kâ*, on the other, thus demonstrates a shift, particularly in the context of the signing and application of the 1998 Noumea Accord, towards the partial acceptance and appropriation by the 'mainstream' written press of a politics of Kanak culture and identity similar to that which it had found inadmissible in the 1975 New Caledonian context.

Nevertheless, in the Noumea Accord period the 'mainstream' written press can still be seen to work to broadly maintain the current configuration of power relations, both within New Caledonia (between the Kanak people and the other established ethno-cultural communities) and between New Caledonia and France. This thesis shows that the local written press has, throughout the contemporary period since 1975, predominantly remained resistant to the most radical political implications (for questions of sovereignty and legitimacy in New Caledonia) of Kanak identity as indigenous and of certain Kanak 'customary' structures, processes and actions. If the current configuration of local print-media institutions responsible for the production of the local written press remains largely unchanged, this resistance is likely to persist in the coming years which will see the country traverse the ultimate phase of the Noumea Accord process. Indeed, this resistance may become more pronounced and militant, particularly considering the real potential for increasing social and political polarisation in New Caledonia during this pivotal period.

As illustrated by the political upheavals in New Caledonia from 2011, the contours of local 'citizenship' and the 'common destiny' currently under construction are still in serious flux and will remain highly contentious in the coming years. Particularly significant in this regard is the key tension in the Noumea Accord between, on the one hand, the privileged recognition and 'restitution' of 'Kanak identity' and, on the other, the purportedly equal position and legitimacy held by all of the country's established inhabitants qualifying as local 'citizens'. Regardless of the ultimate outcome of the Noumea Accord and the nature of the country's future relationship to France, this key

tension will remain of central socio-political importance for New Caledonia into the foreseeable future. Both the politics of Kanak culture and identity and its discursive representation in the local written press will consequently also remain important elements and arenas of local socio-political contestation and strategic engagement in this final phase of the Noumea Accord and beyond.

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ANNEX 1

The Kanak '*revendication coutumière*' and '*revendication foncière*'

This brief overview of the history of the *revendication* of the incorporation of Kanak 'customary' authorities into New Caledonia's politico-institutional structure and the *revendication* of the restitution of Kanak lands focuses particularly on the development of these two *revendications* during the thirty-year period covered by this thesis. This development was interlinked to that of the Kanak pro-independence movement's broader 'political' and 'cultural' *revendications* and programs. A general understanding of this history is important for an understanding of the nature and strategic implications of various aspects of the three main 'cultural' events considered in this thesis, each of which took place in a different historical context.

All of the Kanak *revendications* pursued in the country's recent past can themselves only be understood in reference to the complex history of colonisation in New Caledonia. From the middle of the 19th century, colonial domination and despoliation served to radically restructure the socio-political organisation of many Kanak communities. As noted by Michel Naepels, the status and place accorded to indigenous people in the civil and juridical order of the colony was elaborated progressively '*en relation étroite avec la définition d'une politique foncière de colonisation rurale.*'¹ The Kanak population of New Caledonia's main island, the *Grande Terre*, was subjected to a colonial policy of '*cantonnement*', which gave rise to Kanak dispossession and displacement on a massive scale and resulted in the confinement of the Kanak population to strictly delimited '*réserves indigènes*'. These *réserves* represented only 7.17% of the total surface area of the *Grande Terre* by 1912.²

As noted by Benoît Trépied, the overarching political and administrative colonial order instituted in New Caledonia determined:

¹ Naepels (1998: 38).

² Ibid., 42.

*les rapports entre populations autochtones et allochtones, encadrant l'assujettissement des premières vis-à-vis des secondes et organisant parallèlement une intense ségrégation spatiale et sociale.*³

Two distinct politico-administrative systems, represented respectively by the '*Commissions Municipales*' and the '*chefferies indigènes administratives*', were instituted to effect this segregation.⁴

The administrative and socio-political structure progressively imposed on Kanak communities was defined on two levels by the creation of the following administrative categories: firstly, the Kanak village, called the '*tribu*' (corresponding to the *réserve indigène*), which was ruled by a '*petit chef*' nominated by the Governor; and secondly, the '*district indigène*', composed of several *tribus* and ruled by a (similarly nominated) '*grand chef*'.⁵ The colonial domination of the Kanak population was also engendered and entrenched by the institution in 1887 of the repressive '*régime de l'Indigénat*'. This regime severely circumscribed the rights and liberties of Kanak people, defined as '*indigènes non citoyens français*' and subjected as such to a special penal code accompanied by 'directly administered' disciplinary sanctions.⁶ As well as effectively imposing a system of forced labour on the Kanak population and a host of other restrictions (all of which had an impact on 'traditional' Kanak socio-cultural practices), this progressively elaborated repressive colonial regime severely limited the freedom of movement of Kanak people outside the confines of the *réserves indigènes*.

As noted by Christine Demmer, the accumulative politico-juridical effect of the measures described above for the indigenous population was the establishment during the formal colonial period of a separate '*statut foncier*' (according to which *réserves indigènes* were defined as collectively owned, '*incommutables, insaisissables et inaliénables*' lands), a different '*statut personnel*' to that of French citizens (a '*statut*

³ Trépied (2007: 102).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Trépied (2012, forthcoming: footnote 1); and Trépied (2007: 112). Thus, as emphasised by Guiart, '[e]n Nouvelle-Calédonie « *petits chefs* » de village et « *grands chefs* » de districts ne sont qu'une création coloniale.' Guiart (1985: 35).

⁶ Poédi (1999: 288); Trépied (2007: 112-114).

civil particulier qui consacrait leur assujettissement') and a separate administrative regime, organised 'à travers la reconnaissance d'un chef'.⁷

Trépied maintains that during this colonial period:

*les « chefs » disposèrent dans les tribus de réels pouvoirs de contrainte, que ces pouvoirs coloniaux aient renforcé à l'intérieur du monde kanak une position sociale déjà élevée à l'époque pré-coloniale ou permis au contraire une ascension inédite.*⁸

As indicated in this passage, while the formal colonial period marked the imposition of a new socio-political order on Kanak communities, pre-colonial Kanak frames of reference and Kanak agency also persisted in changing and heterogeneous forms and contexts. Naepels similarly affirms in this connection that '[L]a mise en place de l'ordre colonial, en ses multiples aspects, ne peut être lue comme pure passivité kanake'.⁹ He contends:

*[L]es transformations nombreuses et complexes qu'ont entraînées, plus ou moins directement, l'arrivée européenne et la prise de contrôle étatique du territoire calédonien ont certes probablement été vécues comme des événements inouïs, mais néanmoins comme des événements dans lesquels les Kanaks avaient leur part : ces transformations ont été pensées, organisées, inscrites dans une temporalité.*¹⁰

The revendication of the incorporation of Kanak 'customary' authorities into the country's political institutions

A series of significant changes took place in the wake of World War II, including notably the abolition of the 'régime de l'Indigénat', the formal end of the colonial period with the conversion of New Caledonia into a 'Territoire d'Outre-Mer' under the Constitution of the fourth French Republic, the Kanak acquisition of French citizenship and their progressive acquisition of the right to vote. Nevertheless, the relations of

⁷ Demmer (2002: 194).

⁸ Footnote omitted, Trépied (2007: 113).

⁹ Naepels (1998: 53).

¹⁰ Ibid. See also *ibid.*, 70; Trépied (2010: 252, 774).

power and, to a certain extent, the modalities of governance established within the Kanak *tribus* during the colonial period were perpetuated for some years.¹¹ According to Demmer's analysis, for the State, '*il n'était pas question de laisser échapper les moyens de sa domination mais de conférer un rôle de médiation aux chefs et aux notables kanaks*', often constituted in local Kanak bodies called '*Conseils des anciens*'.¹² Demmer consequently characterises the system in place at this time as having been designed to not confer any '*réels pouvoirs*' on these Kanak 'customary' authorities and as leaving their area of competence largely undefined, a situation apparently explained by the fact that the State '*s'opposait toujours à l'institutionnalisation d'un pouvoir coutumier*' and was only willing to acknowledge the Kanak '*spécificité politique*' in this very limited manner.¹³

However, the acquisition by Kanak men of the right to vote and to enter into New Caledonia's local political institutions (which had previously been the exclusive domain of the local male 'European' community) gave rise to additional avenues for Kanak individuals and communities to access and exercise socio-political 'power'¹⁴ and influence beyond the persisting structures of traditional 'customary' authority (including the '*chefs coutumiers*') or those structures of juridico-administrative 'customary' authority (including the '*chefs administratifs*'). While many of the Kanak men who became elected politicians also had some relationship to such traditional and/or administrative 'customary' structures, New Caledonia's political institutions did not recognise or formally incorporate any form of Kanak 'customary' representation *per se*. This was still the case in 1975, at the time of *Mélanésie 2000*.¹⁵

In the 1970s, the different components of the emerging Kanak pro-independence movement all advocated for the incorporation of specifically Kanak political structures and/or modes in some form into the current and, more particularly, the future

¹¹ Trépied (2007: 138-141); Leblic (2003). For a summary of the juridical and concrete effect of the administrative system instituted at this time, see Demmer (2002: 205).

¹² Demmer (2002: 205).

¹³ Ibid., 204-205.

¹⁴ Understood in the 'traditional', rather than in a Foucauldian sense.

¹⁵ However, as discussed in Annex 6, the broad geographical, cultural and linguistic Kanak groupings which informed the organisation of the festival can be seen to correlate to a certain extent to the Kanak 'customary' regions which would later be created in French law as the means of structuring the formal incorporation of Kanak 'customary' representation into the country's politico-institutional structure.

independent country's formal political institutions. Indeed, Naepels underlines a change in the overall perspective held by many Kanak people in relation to Kanak 'custom' which purportedly accompanied the emergence of the '*revendication indépendantiste*' at this time, stating that:

*à la conscience d'une disparition de la coutume, nécessitant une intégration à la loi et l'acceptation de la religion chrétienne pour réussir dans le monde des Blancs s'est substituée l'idée que l'autonomie de la coutume, disparue sous une loi étrangère, doit renaître, d'une nouvelle manière, comme un avenir à créer qui porte le nom d'Indépendance Kanak Socialiste [...].*¹⁶

The inclusion of the term 'Socialist' in the movement's political *revendication* of 'Kanak Socialist Independence' was itself also related to the movement's *revendication* of the inscription of the future social, political and economic organisation of the country within specifically Kanak ('cultural' and 'customary') modalities. According to Trépied's account, there emerged in New Caledonia during the 1970s:

*un discours politique original sur le « socialisme kanak », intégré à l'utopie régionale de la « Melanesian Way » ou du « socialisme mélanésien », évoquant à la fois le respect de la « coutume » et la solidarité de classe.*¹⁷

In an interview in 1985, Jean-Marie Tjibaou affirmed that the fundamental element of the *revendication* of the Kanak people is the *revendication* of dignity and of an independence '*fondée sur la spécificité kanak*' – that is, founded on Kanak 'culture'.¹⁸

Tjibaou further elaborated on this point by stating:

*[l]a spécificité doit être fondée culturellement, philosophiquement, et par rapport aussi au sens du développement. Quand on parle de socialisme, qu'est-ce que cela veut dire en pays kanak ?*¹⁹

An answer to this question was given by Tjibaou in an earlier interview, in which he stated in relation to the question of the country's future economic development:

¹⁶ Naepels (1998: 72).

¹⁷ Footnote omitted, Trépied (2007: 616).

¹⁸ Tjibaou (1996: 192).

¹⁹ Ibid., 203.

*[n]ous n'avons que de faibles moyens monétaires, mais, pour nous, l'être compte plus que l'avoir. Mais nous devons arriver à exprimer au niveau des institutions la manière de produire kanak. [...] Notre art de vivre comporte la production d'ignames à la fois pour faire la coutume et pour notre subsistance, mais le premier objectif compte autant que le second. Il faut donc produire afin de nourrir le peuple selon ses habitudes. [...] Nous insistons sur l'économie de base, sur la coopération de groupe. Tel est pour nous le sens du socialisme.*²⁰

On the other hand, writing in 2010, Demmer argues that the economic development advocated and pursued by the FLNKS throughout the period of the Matignon and Noumea Accords (intimately interlinked to its '*revendication foncière*' and to the political program of *rééquilibrage*) has been inscribed in '*la plus pure tradition capitaliste*', often without reference to '*une spécificité [culturelle] kanake*'.²¹

The issue of the incorporation into the country's political institutions of Kanak 'customary' representation itself only came to the fore in the political discussions between representatives of the State and of the local pro- and anti-independence blocks in the 1980s. Thus, the first clause of the text produced at the end of the 1983 Nainville-les-Roches round-table discussions between these representatives affirmed the:

*[v]olonté commune des participants de voir confirmer définitivement l'abolition du fait colonial par la reconnaissance à l'égalité de la civilisation mélanésienne et la manifestation de sa représentativité par la coutume dans des institutions à définir.*²²

However, this text was not ultimately signed by the representatives of the RPCR.

The first real concession made to this particular *revendication* of the Kanak independence movement appeared in the 1984 Lemoine Statute, which redefined New Caledonia's politico-institutional structure and incorporated a very limited form of

²⁰ Ibid., 118.

²¹ Demmer (2010: 380). Demmer contrasts this approach to that adopted in opposition to it by the members of CAUGERN since 2005; Demmer (2010: 380-381). CAUGERN is discussed in Annex 11 in relation to the *Mwā Kā* initiative.

²² Quoted in Association pour la fondation d'un institut Kanak d'histoire moderne (1984: 107); Gabriel and Kermel (1985: 130).

Kanak 'customary' representation, with a purely consultative role.²³ This incorporation was hotly contested at the time.²⁴ While the way in which such 'customary' representation is or should be institutionalised still remain controversial, every New Caledonian statutory regime since the Lemoine Statute has included some form of 'customary' representation within the local political institutional structure. Under these different statutory regimes, the territorial subdivisions of New Caledonia created to give form to this 'customary' representation have had varying degrees of congruence with the politico-administrative territorial subdivisions of the country.

Subsequent to the finalisation of the Matignon Accords in 1988, the present-day, two-fold regional subdivision of the archipelago – into three politico-administrative 'Provinces' (North, South and Islands) and eight Kanak 'cultural'/'customary' '*aires coutumières*' – was instituted. As the Matignon Accords agreement was enacted in French law, the eight *aires coutumières* provided the basis of Kanak 'customary' representation through new Territorial and regional consultative institutions: the '*Conseil consultatif coutumier du territoire*' and eight '*Conseils coutumiers*' (one for each *aire coutumière*). The *Conseil consultatif coutumier du territoire* was constituted as an assembly of representatives from all of the *aires coutumières*, designated '*selon les usages reconnus par la coutume*'.²⁵ It was stipulated that consultation of this *Conseil*

²³ Loi n° 84-821 du 6 septembre 1984 portant statut du territoire de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et dépendances, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 7 September 1984, 2840, <<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/>> ; <<http://www.congres.nc/textes-fondamentaux>>. See also 'LA TABLE RONDE DE NAINVILLE – LA SEANCE DE LUNDI A FAIT « LE TOUR DES CONCESSIONS POSSIBLES »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/07/1983, 31; 'LES RESULTATS DE LA TABLE RONDE – LA CALEDONIE SERA DECOUPEE EN « 6 PAYS » DONT LES LIMITES DATENT DE... 1878 – MAIS L'ACCORD DEST AMBIGU SUR CEUX QUI AURONT LE DROIT DE VOTE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 15/07/1983, 30; 'SIX PAYS POUR UNE IDENTITE REGIONALE...', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/07/1983, 4; 'LEMOINE ET SON STATUT', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/11/1983, 30.

²⁴ In relation to the debates in the French National Assembly on this issue, see Gabriel and Kermel (1985: 135-136). On the contention surrounding this subject locally, see for example 'LE PSYCHODRAME DE NAINVILLE-LES-ROCHES – UN « JEU DE LA VERITE » POUR PREPARER UN STATUT', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 11/07/1983, 26; 'LE PRINCIPE D'UNE DEUXIEME ASSEMBLEE EST ADMIS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 11/07/1983, 27; Les Nouvelles, 'TABLE RONDE – L'ESPRIT DE NAINVILLE-LES-ROCHES PEUT-IL SOUFFLER DANS LE FLOU?', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/07/1983, 25.

²⁵ Loi n°88-1028 du 9 novembre 1988 portant dispositions statutaires et préparatoires à l'autodétermination de la Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1998, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 10 November 1998, 14087, <<http://www.congres.nc/textes-fondamentaux>>, <<http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/11/dossiers/Nouvelle-caledonie/881028.asp>>, article 60 ('Loi n°88-1028 du 9 novembre 1988 portant dispositions statutaires et préparatoires à l'autodétermination de la Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1998').

consultatif coutumier du territoire was mandatory in relation to ‘*les projets et propositions de délibérations des assemblées de province relatives au statut de droit particulier et au droit foncier.*’²⁶ This body was also given the power to refer any questions or propositions in relation to these subjects to the Territorial Congress or the Provincial Assemblies, on its own initiative or at the request of representatives from any *aire coutumière*.²⁷ The *Conseil consultatif coutumier du territoire* could also be consulted on ‘*les projets et propositions de délibérations du congrès du territoire et des assemblées de province*’, and on any other matter on the initiative of the High Commissioner.²⁸

The composition of each of the eight *Conseils coutumiers* was similarly to be determined ‘*selon les usages propres à chaque aire*’.²⁹ Consultation of these regional *Conseils coutumiers* by the President of the *Conseil consultatif coutumier du territoire* was mandatory in relation to ‘*les projets et propositions de délibérations des assemblées de province relatives au statut de droit civil particulier et au droit foncier.*’³⁰ These *Conseils* could also be consulted in relation to any other matter by the Presidents of the Provincial Assemblies.³¹

The 1998 Noumea Accord and the *Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie* have reinforced the same two-fold regional subdivision of the archipelago into three Provinces and eight *aires coutumières*.³² In relation to the latter subdivision, the measures specified in the Noumea Accord for the realisation of ‘*la pleine reconnaissance de l’identité kanak*’ include the valorisation of the ‘*rôle des aires coutumières*’, and the transformation of the *Conseil consultatif coutumier du territoire*

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid. Article 60 also gave the *Conseil consultatif coutumier du territoire* the power to refer any relevant matters to representatives of the relevant *aires coutumières*.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., article 61.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² *Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, n° 68, 21 March 1999, 4197; consolidated version as at 2 November 2011, <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do;jsessionid=DF96DFC0BADCAE29EFCBE79A6370A31C.tpdjo11v_2?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000393606&dateTexte=20111102>, article 1 (‘*Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*’). The names of the eight *aire coutumières* as they are stipulated in article 1 are: ‘*Hoot Ma Whaap, Paicî-Cèmuhi, Ajië Aro, Xârâcùù, Drubea-Kapumë, Nengone, Drehu, Iaai.*’

into the *Sénat coutumier*.³³ The *Sénat coutumier*, which is legally constituted as one of New Caledonia's (political) 'institutions',³⁴ is composed of 16 members (two per *aire coutumière*) and, according to the terms of the Noumea Accord, must be consulted '*sur les sujets intéressant l'identité kanak*.'³⁵ Thus, article 143 of the *Loi organique* stipulates that the *Sénat coutumier* must be consulted by the President of the New Caledonian Government, the President of the New Caledonian Congress or the President of a Provincial Assembly, '*sur les projets ou propositions de délibération intéressant l'identité kanak*.'³⁶ Article 143 also states that the *Sénat* may be consulted by these same authorities on any other '*projets ou propositions de délibération*', or by the High Commissioner on any '*questions de la compétence de l'Etat*.'³⁷ The jurisdictional scope of this institution's consultative function has thus been enlarged considerably in comparison to its predecessor and extends well beyond any narrowly defined conception of Kanak 'custom'.

Moreover, in addition to its mandatory and discretionary consultative functions, the *Sénat coutumier* has been attributed with a number of other significant functions. As noted by Christophe Chabrot: '*le Sénat coutumier a une quadruple nature administrative, consultative, propositionnelle et législative*.'³⁸ The institution's limited legislative function is conferred by article 142, which stipulates that:

[t]out projet ou proposition de loi du pays relatif aux signes identitaires [...], au statut civil coutumier, au régime des terres coutumières et, notamment, à la définition des baux destinés à régir les relations entre les propriétaires coutumiers et exploitants sur ces terres et au régime des palabres coutumiers, aux limites des aires coutumières ainsi qu'aux

³³ Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, n° 121, 27 May 1998, 8039, <<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000555817&dateTexte=>>, 'Document d'orientation', point 1.2 ('*Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*').

³⁴ *Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, article 2.

³⁵ *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie* signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998, 'Document d'orientation', point 1.2.5.

³⁶ *Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, article 143.

³⁷ Ibid. Furthermore, if the *Sénat coutumier* considers that a matter which has been referred to it affects one or more *aires coutumières*, the President of the *Sénat* must refer the matter to the relevant *Conseils coutumiers*: ibid., article 144.

³⁸ Chabrot (2009: 6).

*modalités d'élection au sénat coutumier et aux conseils coutumiers est transmis au sénat coutumier par le président du congrès.*³⁹

Article 142 then provides that the text of the project or proposition for any such *loi du pays* as adopted by the *Sénat coutumier* is to be submitted for deliberation by the Congress. If further changes are made to the text by the Congress, it must once again be submitted to the *Sénat coutumier*. However, if this latter body does not adopt the revised text within one month, '*le congrès statue définitivement.*'⁴⁰ As noted by Chabrot, the *Sénat coutumier* consequently has a:

*caractère législatif ponctuel. Autrement dit, elle peut être considérée comme une deuxième chambre [législative] mais uniquement dans un domaine particulier [...] et qui est directement relié à sa représentativité ou mode de désignation.*⁴¹

The institution's '*fonction propositionnelle*' is provided in article 145, which states that the *Sénat* can, on its own initiative or on the request of a *Conseil coutumier*, refer '*toute proposition intéressant l'identité kanak*' to the Government, the Congress or to a Provincial Assembly.⁴² Several articles confer on the *Sénat* its '*fonctions administratives*'. As well as being responsible for officially recognising (and giving notification to stipulated local State authorities) of '*la désignation des autorités coutumières*',⁴³ the *Sénat* is also involved, along with the *Conseils coutumiers*, in designating the members of the *Académie des langues kanak*.⁴⁴ Finally, the *Sénat coutumier* is also represented on the *Conseil économique et social*, the '*Conseils d'administration*' of certain '*établissements publics*' and the *Comité consultatif des mines*.⁴⁵

Article 150 also confers important functions on the eight regional *Conseils coutumiers*. In addition to having a consultative function in relation to matters referred to it by the *Sénat coutumier*, the *Conseil coutumier* of each *aire coutumière* can be consulted on

³⁹ *Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, article 142.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Chabrot (2009: 7).

⁴² *Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, article 145.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, article 141.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, article 140.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

any matter by the High Commissioner, the New Caledonian Government, the President of a Provincial Assembly or a Mayor.⁴⁶ Perhaps the most significant element of the consultative function of the eight *Conseils coutumiers* stems from the provision in article 150 that they can be consulted by any administrative or juridical authority on the interpretation ‘*des règles coutumières*’. Moreover, article 150 provides that the *Conseils coutumiers* constitute the final arbiters ‘*[e]n cas de litige sur l’interprétation d’un procès-verbal de palabre coutumier*’.⁴⁷ As highlighted by Chabrot, the consultative function of the *Sénat coutumier* itself:

*se fait à concurrence de la compétence dévolue aux autorités coutumières locales saisies par les autorités administratives ou juridictionnelles et qui sont plus particulièrement compétentes pour interpréter les coutumes, domaine qui ne concerne pas le Sénat coutumier.*⁴⁸

While the members of the *Sénat coutumier* have five-year terms, the Presidency is held on a yearly basis,⁴⁹ rotating by *aire coutumière* and designated within the *Sénat* by consensus (as stipulated in its internal regulations).⁵⁰ In the terms of the *Loi organique*, the two members of the *Sénat coutumier* representing each *aire coutumière* are to be designated by the relevant *Conseil coutumier* ‘*selon les usages reconnus par la coutume*’.⁵¹ The composition of the *Conseil coutumier* for each *aire coutumière* is specified as being ‘*fixée selon les usages propres à celle-ci*’.⁵² However, the *Loi organique* also provides for a possible change to the manner in which the members of the country’s customary institutions are determined.⁵³ Thus, in relation to the composition of the *Sénat coutumier*, the *Loi organique* stipulates that:

[p]our les renouvellements du sénat coutumier intervenant à compter de 2005, ses membres peuvent être élus dans chaque aire coutumière selon

⁴⁶ Ibid., article 150.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Chabrot (2009: 7).

⁴⁹ *Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, article 139.

⁵⁰ ‘Le pays kanak en congrès’, *Le pays magazine*, no. 16, mars 2007, 9.

⁵¹ *Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, article 137.

⁵² Ibid., article 149.

⁵³ This possibility did not form part of the final text of the Noumea Accord agreement itself.

*des modalités et par un collège électoral déterminés par une loi du pays.*⁵⁴

In this event, provision is also made for a similar change to be effected in relation to the determination of the members of the *Conseils coutumiers*.⁵⁵

These provisions have been the subject of considerable debate in New Caledonia, particularly within the Kanak community itself. They directly raise the question of the character and legitimacy of these institutions. In the view of Jean-Yves Faberon, a specialist in France's '*droit Outre-Mer*', the '*changement de type de légitimité*' that would be engendered by a shift to elections as the means of designating the members of the *Sénat coutumier*: '*renforcerait les critiques de ceux qui reprochent au sénat coutumier d'être une construction du droit français n'offrant qu'une imitation de la coutume par des voies non authentiques.*'⁵⁶ Faberon continues:

*[i]l est vrai qu'un processus électoral pourrait conduire à la tête des conseils d'aire et au sénat des coutumiers de moindre rang que les grands chefs qui seraient contestés. Une fois encore la logique démocratique et la logique kanak, ici coutumière, diffèrent, et il faut en tenir compte. Si l'on cherche réellement l'identité kanak, il faut savoir que les chemins coutumiers ont leurs particularités profondes.*⁵⁷

Certainly, the use of democratic electoral processes to determine socio-political representatives and authorities is not identifiable as having been a feature of Kanak 'customary' processes or structures. Moreover, Faberon's argument justifying the maintenance of the status quo in relation to the designation of the members of the *Sénat*

⁵⁴ *Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, article 137. Note that, in 2005, Déwé Gorodey, who was then Vice-President and responsible for the portfolio of '*Affaires coutumières*' (in addition to those of Culture, the '*Condition féminine*' and Citizenship) in the New Caledonian Government, pursued the option provided in article 137 to change the mode of designating the members of the *Sénat* to an electoral process. However, the *loi du pays* formulated to this effect was abandoned subsequent to extensive consultation with Kanak communities and '*coutumiers*' throughout New Caledonia, which appear to have been largely unfavourable to such a change. See '*Des femmes au Sénat coutumier ?*', *Le pays* magazine, no. 1, octobre 2005, 7; Thierry Squillario, '*La fracture coutumière*', *Les infos*, no. 122, 21/01/2005, 3; Déwé Gorodey, '*Le rôle du Sénat coutumier*', *Les infos*, no. 124, 04/02/2005, 4; '*Le sénat coutumier a renouvelé ses représentants*', *Tour de Côte*, no. 162, octobre 2005, 14. See also Chauchat (2009: 6-7). However, the question remains the subject of considerable debate.

⁵⁵ *Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, article 149.

⁵⁶ Faberon (2008: 146-147).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 147.

coutumier can be seen to echo the perspective maintained by some of those members themselves.⁵⁸ However, this argument is not only founded on the assumption that the so-called ‘Kanak customary logic’ is unproblematic and is satisfied by the designation of ‘*grands chefs*’ (whose ‘customary’ authority is consequently posited as being uncontested) to the *Sénat coutumier*, it is also founded on the assumption that the *Sénat coutumier* represents an institution capable of embodying and representing Kanak ‘custom’ in an ‘authentic’ manner (judged according to Kanak custom’s own internal criteria). By reason of these assumptions, the position articulated by Faberon in the above passage tends to occlude some of the very complex issues and competing interests at stake.

The contemporary issues surrounding Kanak ‘customary’ authorities relate in large measure to the legacies of the country’s colonial history.⁵⁹ Moreover, as a result of the continually changing interplay since first European contact between many heterogeneous factors in the context of highly specific local dynamics,⁶⁰ the contemporary issue of the (relative) legitimacy of different, often contested and competing contemporary authorities identified or self-identifying as ‘customary’ is highly complex.⁶¹ This situation is further complicated by the interrelating contemporary debates concerning the respective legitimacies of and relationships between elected Kanak politicians, on the one hand, and Kanak ‘customary’ authorities, on the other, debates which themselves have a long history.⁶²

⁵⁸ See, for example, the views expressed in 2009 by Julien Boanemoui as the newly designated President of the *Sénat coutumier* quoted in Philippe Frédière, ‘Questions à... Julien Boanemoui, nouveau président du Sénat coutumier « Mal compris hors du monde kanak »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 31/08/2009, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

⁵⁹ These issues are highlighted in the Preamble of the Noumea Accord itself which, after acknowledging the devastating effect of colonisation and the dispossession of Kanak lands on the ‘*organisation sociale kanak*’, states that: ‘[I]es mouvements de population l’ont déstructurée, la méconnaissance ou des stratégies de pouvoir ont conduit trop souvent à nier les autorités légitimes et à mettre en place des autorités dépourvues de légitimité selon la coutume, ce qui a accentué le traumatisme identitaire.’ *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*, ‘Préambule’, point 3.

⁶⁰ For instance, the contemporary situation in the Loyalty Islands, where Kanak communities were often not alienated from their lands, is different to that in the many areas of the *Grande Terre* affected by such dispossession.

⁶¹ However, the acknowledgement of this complexity should not be read as a blanket impeachment or indictment of the legitimacy of all contemporary Kanak ‘customary’ authorities. In this connection, see Naepels (1998: 69).

⁶² According to Trépiéd, this history dates back to the 1950s, ‘when local chiefs started to share political power with Kanak who entered electoral politics.’ Trépiéd (2012, forthcoming).

On the other hand, '*la coutume*' continues to have considerable contemporary significance for many Kanak people as a meaningful socio-political reality. Kanak 'custom' was represented by Jean-Marie Tjibaou (who was himself a Kanak *chef*, as well as an elected politician) as being fundamentally linked to Kanak identity, proclaiming at a public event in 1982 that: '[n]ous sommes Canaques à cause de la coutume et non pas à cause de la couleur de notre peau'.⁶³ In an interview in March 1984, Tjibaou affirmed that:

*la coutume, à côté de traits matériels distinctif, est aussi l'ensemble des institutions spécifiques des Mélanésien, qui leur sont propres, les définissent et les valorisent comme hommes, les authentifient à leurs propres yeux plus que ne sauraient faire les actes administratifs instaurés et imposés par les Blancs.*⁶⁴

Moreover, while certain prominent Kanak figures in contemporary politics (such as Déwé Gorodey and Nidoïsh Naisseline, who is also a *grand chef* of Maré) have criticised the *Sénat coutumier* and some other officially recognised 'customary' authorities as not corresponding to or representing Kanak 'custom',⁶⁵ their arguments (which can be seen to be geared towards furthering particular agendas) do not question, but rather fundamentally affirm the contemporary importance and legitimacy of Kanak 'custom' as it is identified and constructed by them.⁶⁶

⁶³ 'LA COUTUME AVANT L'HORAIRE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/09/1982, 6. See also Tjibaou (1996: 203).

⁶⁴ Tjibaou (1996: 153).

⁶⁵ In 2005, Naisseline maintained that, '*dans le context politique actuel, si le Sénat coutumier peut avoir une utilité certain, il n'est cependant pas une institution coutumière : ni au regard de la loi, ni au regard de la société kanak.*' Naisseline also affirmed that: '*le Sénat coutumier ne correspond à aucune réalité culturelle locale.*' Nidoïsh Naisseline, 'Du Sénat coutumier', *Les infos*, no. 148, 05/08/2005, 3. In the same year, Déwé Gorodey maintained that the *Sénat coutumier* is '*une institution à l'occidentale acquise par la lutte politique.*' Moreover, Gorodey argued that the '*Sénat coutumier ne reflète pas la réalité de la coutume, telle qu'elle est vécue à la base.*' 'Des femmes au Sénat coutumier?', *Le pays magazine*, no. 1, octobre 2005, 7.

⁶⁶ In contrast to the *Sénat coutumier*, Naisseline implicitly identifies '*le clan et la chefferie*' as meaningful groupings from the perspective of Kanak '*coutume*'. Nidoïsh Naisseline, 'Du Sénat coutumier', *Les infos*, no. 148, 05/08/2005, 3. According to Gorodey: '*[L]es institutions qui relèvent directement de la coutume sont les clans liés à la terre, avec une prise en compte du fait colonial, qui en a déplacé certains, en a éliminé d'autres avec les conséquences que l'on connaît, avec notamment des chefs coutumiers et des chefs administratifs.*' 'Des femmes au Sénat coutumier?', *Le pays magazine*, no. 1, octobre 2005, 7. In this connection it is worth noting Naepels's comments on the word '*clan*', which he identifies as being used throughout New Caledonia as '*un mot-valise qui désigne des réalités sociales variables selon la région considérée, et parfois équivoques.*' Footnote omitted, Naepels (1998: 244).

The *revendication* of Kanak ‘customary’ lands throughout the *Grande Terre* and in the Noumea region

As in the case of the *revendication* of the incorporation of Kanak ‘customary’ representation into the country’s politico-institutional structure, the local context in 1975 at the time of *Mélanésie 2000* was very different to that in the 1990s and subsequently, when the other events considered in this thesis took place, in terms of the *revendication* of Kanak lands on the basis of posited antecedent proprietary rights. In 1975, this type of Kanak land *revendication* was only just emerging and the various modes of its articulation were still developing. According to Louis Mapou, prior to 1970:

*les questions de terres interviennent peu, si ce n’est lors des demandes d’agrandissement de la superficie des réserves, trop réduite au regard d’une démographie croissante.*⁶⁷

The *revendication* of Kanak lands would, however, become a central element of the program and strategy developed progressively by the nascent Kanak independence movement during the 1970s and 1980s. For, as stated by Mapou:

*[la terre] devient, à partir des années soixante-dix, un élément de contestation du système colonial, un lieu de résistance où se manifestent les contradictions de la société calédonienne.*⁶⁸

Naepels also identifies the issue of Kanak lands on the *Grande Terre* as having constituted one of the causes of the ‘*tournant indépendantiste*’ of Kanak political mobilisation during this period.⁶⁹

The recuperation of Kanak ‘customary’ lands no longer in the legal or actual ‘possession’ of the relevant Kanak groups was a key focus of the radical anti-colonial and anti-capitalist group formed in 1974 by young Kanak militant activists from the *Grande Terre*, who called themselves the *Groupe 1878*⁷⁰ in reference to the major

⁶⁷ Louis Mapou (1999a: 138, footnote 1).

⁶⁸ Ibid., 137-138.

⁶⁹ Naepels (1998: 292).

⁷⁰ See Gabriel and Kermel (1985: 104); Chappell (2003: 198). In contrast, the recuperation of specific Kanak lands was not equally central to the *Foulauds Rouges*, formed in 1969 by Nidoïsh Naisseline and other young Kanak anti-colonial and anti-capitalist activists primarily from the Loyalty Islands, where colonisation had not entailed the same type of large-scale alienation and displacement of Kanak people from their lands. Gabriel and Kermel (1985: 102).

Kanak insurrection mounted on the *Grande Terre* in 1878 in response to the progressive, large-scale dispossession of Kanak lands and the recently introduced policy of Kanak ‘*cantonnement*’.⁷¹ In 1977, when the *Union Calédonienne* (which had for many years been the dominant local political party) first officially adopted a position in favour of independence, prompting the departure of the majority of its remaining ‘European’ members, the question of Kanak land rights also became one of the party’s primary foci.⁷²

In addition to developments in the local political sphere, Naepels directly links the emerging Kanak land *revendications* during this period to the simultaneously emerging Kanak cultural *revendications*. Thus, after describing the ‘*conjonction de cause*’ which contributed to the appearance in the 1970s of the movement of Kanak cultural reaffirmation (citing in this connection the organisation of *Mélanésie 2000* in Noumea),⁷³ Naepels affirms that:

*[d]ans le monde rural, ce mouvement a pris la forme très générale de la naissance d’une revendication foncière en termes non seulement économiques mais aussi et surtout culturels, par la revendication des lieux sacrés, des cimetières et des sites autrefois cultivés et habités, et par les premières occupations de terrains revendiqués.*⁷⁴

The first legislation formally introducing a land reform regime in New Caledonia in the contemporary period was passed by the French Government in 1978. According to Louis Mapou, through the institution of this regime (designed to facilitate, but also to control and delimit the Kanak *revendication* of specific lands) ‘*les pouvoirs publics pensent pouvoir rattraper les retards et répondre aux aspirations [politiques et*

⁷¹ This insurrection was led by the now iconic figure and symbol of Kanak resistance to colonial domination, the ‘*chef*’ Ataï. According to various authors, the insurrection, which lasted two months and saw the deaths of close to 200 ‘*colons*’, was brutally repressed and Ataï himself was decapitated and his head sent to Paris. The insurrection was followed by a sustained campaign of so-called ‘*nettoyage*’ by the French authorities, which lasted six months and which reportedly saw the deaths of more than 2000 Kanak people. Bensa (1990a: 86-92); Leblic (2003: 300); Trépied (2007: 105).

⁷² J. N. F., ‘MALGRE LES APPARENCES, LE CONGRES DU CHAMBARDEMENT’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/05/1977, 6.

⁷³ Naepels (1998: 286). The particular historical juncture and context of the 1970s is discussed at the beginning of Chapter One.

⁷⁴ Naepels (1998: 287).

foncières] nouvelles des Mélanésiens.’⁷⁵ From 1978 onwards, the legal, administrative and political context relating specifically to Kanak land claims (and so having a direct impact on the modes of their articulation) would undergo a series of changes with the institution of successive land reform regimes until relative juridical stability in this area was achieved subsequent to the Matignon Accords, followed and reinforced by the Noumea Accord.⁷⁶

It is important to distinguish between the two broad, interconnected registers in which the emergent Kanak independence movement articulated and mobilised the Kanak *revendication foncière*.⁷⁷ At the most general level, Kanak rights in relation to land were linked to the overarching assertion of the particular status of the Kanak people as the country’s original inhabitants (its indigenous people) and their concomitant right to political independence and sovereignty. At a lower level of abstraction, the movement would also affirm as a general principle the rights of specific Kanak groups to particular lands on the basis of prior ‘ownership’ (often formulated in terms of Kanak ‘customary’ rights).⁷⁸ The assertion of these specific land claims was also used by the independence movement as a strategy both to strengthen and mobilise its popular, grass-roots support base within Kanak communities and to create political leverage locally and nationally for its pro-independence program.⁷⁹

According to Gabriel and Kermel, the radicalisation of the ‘*mouvement populaire kanak*’, particularly during the 1980s, was in large measure the result of the ‘*durcissement des revendications de terres*’ though the actions led by pro-independence

⁷⁵ Louis Mapou (1999a: 141).

⁷⁶ Ibid., 137-156. See also Naepels (1998: 292-297); Demmer (2010).

⁷⁷ However, it should be emphasised that there has been considerable variation in the specific ways in which the different groups forming part of this broader political movement have conceived of and pursued the Kanak *revendication foncière*. See, for example, the discussion on this point in Demmer (2010).

⁷⁸ See the discussion below.

⁷⁹ Indeed, Demmer maintains that, ‘[p]our les différents partis – Union calédonienne (UC), Palika, Union progressiste mélanésienne (UPM), Union multiraciale (UMNC/FULK) –, la question de la récupération des terres fut fédératrice du combat pour l’indépendance parce qu’elle permettait d’affirmer le droit au contrôle du pays et à la souveraineté.’ On the other hand, Demmer also notes that ‘les revendications de terres s’apparentent à double titre à une volonté d’affirmer une antériorité : face à l’État français et dans le jeu politique interne.’ Demmer (2010: 377). See also the discussion below.

political groups and other Kanak organisations.⁸⁰ Thus, as noted by Dominique Guillaud:

*[l]es revendications, par les groupes autochtones, de terres aux mains des Européens ont pris différentes tournures selon les périodes : legalistes au départ, elles se radicalisent à la fin des années soixante-dix ; certains terrains revendiqués sont occupés et une case y est symboliquement édifiée.*⁸¹

As discussed in Chapters One and Two, the ‘traditional’ Kanak *case* (particularly the *grande case*) emerged in the 1970s as a strong symbol of the Kanak cultural revival and the affirmation and *revendication* of Kanak culture and identity. *Mélanésie 2000* itself has been identified by several authors as having played a key role in the re-emergence of this ‘cultural’ form and symbol throughout the *Grande Terre* in subsequent years. The ‘traditional’ Kanak *case* was also adopted and mobilised by the Kanak independence movement in the 1970s and 1980s as a symbol of their overall political project and *revendication*. The emergence of the Kanak *case* as a symbol closely associated with the active *revendication* and occupation of lands by Kanak groups throughout the *Grande Terre*, particularly from the beginning of the 1980s,⁸² was interrelated to these other developments.

All of the events considered in this thesis were held primarily or entirely in or on the outskirts of New Caledonia’s capital city. Noumea can be seen to represent the symbolic and actual centre of non-Kanak settlement and political and economic dominance in the country. It has thus often been referred to as ‘*la ville blanche*’ by pro-independence and ‘loyalist’ activists and politicians alike.⁸³ According to Dorothee Dussy, writing in 2000:

⁸⁰ Gabriel and Kermel (1985: 159).

⁸¹ Dominique Guillaud in David, Guillaud and Pillon (1999: 99).

⁸² More recently, the *revendication* of specific lands appears also to have been marked in some instances by the erection of a ‘*bois tabou*’ similar in form to those erected in relation the Goro and the Koniambo nickel mining projects, as discussed in Annex 11.

⁸³ Indeed, Sylvain Pabouty attributes this phrase to Roger Laroque, the longstanding conservative and ‘loyalist’ Mayor of Noumea from 1953 to 1985, affirming that Laroque was ‘*célèbre pour sa fromule Nouméa la ville blanche*’: Pabouty (2000-2001: 76, footnote 3).

*[L]'identité et le système de valeurs de la « ville blanche » qu'est Nouméa se sont construits au cours d'une histoire marquée par la volonté d'exclusion des Kanak de la ville.*⁸⁴

Dussy highlights in this regard the fact that, until 1946, the '*régime de l'Indigénat*' strictly limited and controlled the movement of Kanak people in Noumea.⁸⁵

Dussy also maintains that, particularly given the establishment and growth of 'squatter' settlements and the contemporary disputes over competing 'customary' claims in relation to the city area,

*Nouméa, pendant longtemps préservé, est devenu le lieu ultime où se cristallisent les conflits qui agitent aujourd'hui la société calédonienne, et l'investissement de l'espace urbain, lieu par excellence de la concentration du pouvoir, est, pour certains, lourd de symboles.*⁸⁶

For, as explained by Dussy in relation to Noumea's squatter settlements:

*occuper la ville, c'est occuper le cœur du pouvoir, le lieu des décisions d'importance et du bien économique et avoir ainsi, sinon la possibilité de partager ce pouvoir, du moins un argument pour faire valoir des droits au partage.*⁸⁷

Indeed, Dussy maintains that establishing '*une légitimité foncière*' in relation to the lands of the greater Noumea region '*est aujourd'hui la condition indispensable à l'acquisition ou à la conservation du pouvoir politique dans la région du sud-ouest de la Grande Terre*' for the various Kanak groups concerned.⁸⁸

It is also important to note in this connection that, as again highlighted by Dussy:

*[L]a classe politique et la classe d'affaires de Nouméa sont de leur côté bien renseignées sur les divergences qui opposent les différentes autorités coutumières du sud-ouest de la Grande Terre à propos de leur légitimité sur la zone de Nouméa.*⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Dussy (2000: 147).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 166-167.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 148.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 165.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Consequently, local politicians and '*les grands entrepreneurs*' call on 'customary' representatives from one or other of the opposing groups according to their political affiliations when they need to arrange for a 'customary' ceremony to be held in the Noumea area.⁹⁰

Dussy dates the first contemporary Kanak land *revendications* in the Noumea area as having followed the institution of the initial land reform regime in 1978,⁹¹ that is, well after *Mélanésie 2000* but well before the other events considered in this thesis. On the other hand, Dussy also contends that the rivalry between the two primary '*chefferies*' claiming in the 1990s and subsequently to be the 'traditional' owners of the Noumea area corresponds to a conflict that existed at the moment of the region's colonisation. According to Dussy, by reason of the ensuing '*guerres coloniales*' this conflict was not able to be resolved and now represents a '*situation en sursis*', which '*n'a jamais été oblitérée dans la mémoire des protagonistes*'.⁹²

On Dussy's account, while neither of these two main groups⁹³ claim to be the '*maîtres de la terre*' of the lands in question, all of those currently engaged in the '*revendication foncière*' of the Noumea area represent themselves '*comme des parents ou alliés des clans terriens des lieux revendiqués*' (clans which generally no longer exist or have very few living identifiable members).⁹⁴ Dussy identifies this as a means of legitimating their 'customary' claims over the land, in conformity with the currently dominant means of establishing such 'customary' legitimacy, broadly accepted within the Kanak community.⁹⁵

As highlighted by Naepels, from a 'traditional' Kanak perspective:

la propriété [foncière] n'est pas univoque, mais consiste plutôt en droits différenciés, en légitimités additionnées, qui donnent à celui qui fonde, à celui qui nettoie, à celui qui travaille, à celui qui habite des titres à dire

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Dussy (2003: 3).

⁹² Ibid., 4.

⁹³ These two main groups are the '*Kambwa*' and the '*Morari*', although Dussy also highlights a significant schism between two branches of the *Kambwa*, now based around Païta and Saint-Louis respectively.

⁹⁴ Dussy (2000: 162).

⁹⁵ Ibid.

*qu'un lieu est sien, dans la mesure où il reconnaît les titres concurrents.*⁹⁶

It was only during the 1970s when land reform became a legal reality in New Caledonia that the currently dominant, broadly accepted means of establishing the 'customary' legitimacy of specific Kanak claims to 'customary' 'ownership' of lands – exclusively through identification with the '*fondateurs d'un lieu*' or '*maîtres de la terre*' – emerged and became entrenched.⁹⁷

Moreover, Naepels maintains in this connection that:

*[c]'est parce qu'il n'y a qu'un seul propriétaire reconnaissable dans un droit écrit que la multiplicité des possibilités d'occupation et d'usage d'une terre, autrefois latentes et remises au jour au gré des circonstances, des déplacements et de l'évolution des rapports sociaux, se transforme aujourd'hui en multiplicité de revendications concurrentes. S'il y a autant de conflits sur la terre, c'est parce qu'en définissant le « vrai » (et unique) propriétaire d'un terrain, on oblige de nombreux autres groupes à abandonner des droits secondaires ou potentiels, et donc à restreindre leurs marges de manœuvre futures.*⁹⁸

The question of the relative legitimacy of the competing contemporary Kanak claims to 'customary' land rights in relation to particular areas is consequently often highly complex and contested, especially given the displacement of many Kanak individuals and groups produced by colonisation. Added complexity also arises from the multiple categories through which collective Kanak rights to land are or can be legally recognised today, via the Kanak '*clan*', '*réserve*' or '*Groupelement de droit particulier local*' (GDPL).⁹⁹

Some of these issues are directly addressed by the Noumea Accord, which affirms that: '*[l]es terres coutumières doivent être cadastrées pour que les droits coutumiers sur une parcelle soient clairement identifiés.*'¹⁰⁰ However, work on this project has been slow to

⁹⁶ Naepels (1998: 242).

⁹⁷ Ibid., 245-6.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 249.

⁹⁹ See Demmer (2010).

¹⁰⁰ *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*, 'Document d'orientation', point 1.4.

progress by reason of its inherently problematic nature (in multiple respects) and the persisting disagreement and contention within the Kanak community in this connection.

ANNEX 2

Organising *Mélanésie 2000*

As noted in Chapter One, Jean-Marie Tjibaou was the President of both *Mélanésie 2000*'s Organising Committee and the *Comité pour le développement*.¹ The overwhelming majority of the published commentaries on *Mélanésie 2000* identify Tjibaou as having played a central role in the formulation and realisation of the festival project. Tjibaou is generally identified as having contributed to the formulation of the initial idea of organising such a Kanak cultural festival, particularly through his simultaneous involvement in the first half of the 1970s with several non-government associations and various bodies within the Territorial administration focussing on the concrete amelioration of the contemporary situation of Kanak communities.

Tjibaou definitively returned to New Caledonia in 1971 after three years of tertiary studies in Metropolitan France. In the same year, Tjibaou formally left the Catholic Priesthood, a decision apparently motivated by his desire to '*se consacrer à « son peuple »*'.² He was first employed within the Territorial administration in the *Service de l'Éducation de base*, which had been created in 1958 by a Kanak politician, Doui Matayo Wetta (who would later become Tjibaou's father-in-law), when serving as a Minister in the Territorial government formed under the '*loi-cadre*'.³ Tjibaou subsequently moved to work in the *Direction territoriale de la Jeunesse et des Sports*, then headed by Gilbert Barillon, a Metropolitan public servant, and in the *Centre de formation d'animateurs* (CeFA), which had been created within the *Direction de la Jeunesse et des Sports* in 1972 and was headed by another Metropolitan public servant,

¹ Missotte (1985: 425, 442).

² Levallois maintained in 1995 that this was the reason given in 1972 by Tjibaou for having left the priesthood: Levallois (1995: 125). Tjibaou had been ordained into the Catholic priesthood in 1965 at the age of 29 and served as the '*deuxième vicaire*' at the Cathedral of Noumea from 1966. He travelled to Metropolitan France in 1968 to undertake tertiary studies, particularly focusing on sociology and ethnology, firstly at the *Institut catholique et social de Lyon* and then at the *Sorbonne* and the *École pratique des hautes études de sciences sociales* in Paris. See particularly Tjibaou in Violette (1989: 15-19); Mokaddem (2005a: 93-123).

³ Missotte (1995b: 62); Trépied (2007: 619). Indeed, according to Waddell, Tjibaou 'played a crucial role' in the revival of the *Service de l'Éducation de base*, which had originally been created 'as part of a range of new initiatives directed to the Melanesian population,' but which had been 'progressively emasculated' during the 1960s: Waddell (2008: 79). Guiart attributes this so-called 'progressive emasculation' to the *Union Calédonienne*: Guiart (1996: 100).

Philippe Missotte.⁴ Both Tjibaou and Missotte were also members of the *Comité territorial de lutte contre l'alcoolisme*, alongside Raymond Charlemagne.⁵

Tjibaou was also closely connected during this period to two recently created Kanak associations: the *Mouvement féminin pour un souriant village mélanésien* and the *Association mélanésienne pour le développement économique, social et culturel* (AMEDESC).⁶ The former association had been formed and was presided over by Scholastique Pidjot, the wife of Kanak politician, Roch Pidjot. Working within a broader perspective aimed at addressing the social crisis being experienced by Kanak communities throughout New Caledonia at the time, this association was primarily focused on combating the posited root causes of alcohol abuse, particularly through the amelioration of hygiene standards and the lived environment in Kanak *tribus*.⁷ This association consequently implemented very concrete, practical programs of individual and collective grass-roots action geared towards and informed by local, specifically Kanak socio-cultural contexts, with the aim of restoring dignity and pride to Kanak people.⁸

The AMEDESC was presided over by another prominent Kanak figure, Auguste Parawi-Reybas.⁹ Tjibaou appears to have been AMEDESC's Secretary General.¹⁰ According to Missotte's account, AMEDESC grouped '*des chefs coutumiers, des chefs « administratifs », des élus, des notables, de tous horizons politiques et religieux.*'¹¹ Eric Waddell characterises the AMEDESC as having been:

⁴ Levallois (1995: 125); Missotte (1995b: 62-63); Mokaddem (2005a: 128-129); Trépied (2007: 619); Waddell (2008: 79).

⁵ Missotte (1995b: 62); Trépied (2007: 620).

⁶ Missotte (1995b: 62); Waddell (2008: 79).

⁷ Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 28); Tjibaou (1996: 38, 152).

⁸ Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 28); Tjibaou (1996: 38, 152). According to Mokaddem, the '*travail militant de ces femmes contribua beaucoup à nourrir la réflexion politique de Tjibaou*': Mokaddem (2005a: 132). In support of this statement, Mokaddem cites from a 1987 interview with Tjibaou, reproduced in Violette (1989): Mokaddem (2005a: 132-133).

⁹ Mokaddem (2005a: 128); Trépied (2007: 619).

¹⁰ Jean Dreyfus, 'L'ASSOCIATION MELANESIENNE POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT SOCIAL ET CULTUREL S'EST REUNIE A HOUAILOU (de notre correspondant Jean Dreyfus)', *La France Australe*, 05/04/1974, 9.

¹¹ Footnote omitted, Missotte (1995b: 62). However, note that in an earlier text Missotte suggests this association was primarily comprised of Kanak people from the *Grande Terre*: Missotte (1985: 420).

directed to both customary and contemporary Melanesian leaders, with the aim of focusing attention on their people's aspirations as well as inciting the leaders to play an active role in satisfying them.¹²

Whereas this association might consequently be viewed as having been aimed at encouraging 'development from within' ¹³ following a 'top down' model, the interrelated aims of the *Mouvement féminin pour un souriant village mélanésien* were pursued through a 'bottom up' model of social action, which nevertheless also entailed and encouraged direct exchanges between individuals and groups living in different Kanak communities.

In *Kanaké, Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie*, the original idea of organising a Kanak cultural festival is attributed to the 'Association [sic] Féminine pour un Souriant Village Mélanésien'.¹⁴ Tjibaou described the sequence of events which resulted in the conception and initiation of the *Mélanésia 2000* festival project in an interview in 1977.¹⁵ He maintained that, subsequent to the emergence of the idea of organising a Kanak cultural festival 'pour lier les groupes entre eux'¹⁶ and as an extension of the work already being undertaken by the *Mouvement féminin*, he presented this idea to the *Direction territoriale de Jeunesse et Sports*, represented by Barillon and Missotte.¹⁷ Tjibaou accredited Missotte with the suggestion of turning the relatively small festival project initially envisaged into a significant, large-scale event.¹⁸

Following this and further development of the proposal, Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Scholastique Pidjot together presented the festival project to the Territory's Secretary-

¹² Waddell (2008: 79). Some details of the orientations, objectives and initiatives of this professedly 'a-political' association appear in LFA's coverage of its first 'réunion de brousse', held in Houaïlou at the end of March 1974: Jean Dreyfus, 'L'ASSOCIATION MELANESIENNE POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT SOCIAL ET CULTUREL S'EST REUNIE A HOUAÏLOU (de notre correspondant Jean Dreyfus)', *La France Australe*, 05/04/1974, 9; 'L'AUTORITE ET L'ANIMATION DANS LES TRIBUS : Thème central de l'AMEDESC à Houaïlou', *La France Australe*, 12/04/1974, 5.

¹³ Waddell (2007: 79).

¹⁴ Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 31). In 1995, Missotte maintained that the idea of the festival took shape in several minds simultaneously: Missotte (1995b: 61).

¹⁵ Tjibaou (1996: 38-39).

¹⁶ Ibid., 38.

¹⁷ Ibid., 39. Missotte situates this initial discussion as having taken place in October 1973: Missotte (1995b: 61).

¹⁸ Tjibaou (1996: 39).

General, Michel Levallois.¹⁹ According to Levallois's subsequent account, Tjibaou and Pidjot:

*estimaient que les Mélanésien devaient redevenir acteurs de leur avenir et que le moment était venu de rompre avec des décennies de sujétion et de passivité dans lesquelles les avaient relégués les entreprises des missionnaires, des politiques et de l'administration depuis la conquête de 1852 [sic], si bien intentionnées et utiles que certaines aient pu être.*²⁰

This focus on enabling and engaging Kanak agency was also central to the *Mouvement féminin pour un souriant village mélanésien* and the AMEDESC.

Levallois's account of the festival project's orientations and objectives echoes the project's presentation by Tjibaou in the 1974 initial text outlining, explaining and promoting the initiative, discussed in Chapter One.²¹ Moreover, Levallois maintains that the *Mélanésie 2000* project was motivated by and undertaken in reference to a particular political perspective which was shared by its Kanak and non-Kanak organisers alike.²² Levallois affirms:

*[n]ous partageons avec Jean-Marie Tjibaou la conviction que le culturel est au cœur du politique qui lui donne sens et dignité et nous savions que la reconnaissance du peuple kanak était le préalable de toute action politique durable en Nouvelle-Calédonie.*²³

However, no political motivations or objectives of this kind were explicitly affirmed or foregrounded by the festival's Kanak organisers or its non-Kanak organisers and backers within the Territorial administration at the time.

Even if it were accepted that this political perspective was shared by the Kanak and non-Kanak individuals who played key roles in the festival's organisation, the extent to

¹⁹ Levallois (1995: 125-126).

²⁰ Ibid., 126. This aspect of *Mélanésie 2000* is particularly significant and is discussed in Chapter One in two main connections. It is discussed in relation to the changing ways in which various local newspapers acknowledged or denied Kanak agency in relation to the organisation and realisation of *Mélanésie 2000*. It is also discussed in relation to the inscription of the festival's organisation and realisation in a specifically Kanak socio-political framework of agency and interaction (broadly identified as Kanak 'custom') and the understanding and emphasis (or otherwise) of this aspect of *Mélanésie 2000* apparent in the contemporary written press coverage of the festival project.

²¹ See Levallois (1995: 126) and Tjibaou in Missotte (1995b: 66-69).

²² Levallois (1995: 127).

²³ Ibid., 127.

which any such political perspective was shared by other (local and national) government and political actors who made *Mélanésie 2000* possible (particularly through financially supporting the project) would appear to have been very limited. However, Levallois himself was highly supportive of the festival proposal and, according to Waddell, he ‘made the project possible’, particularly through convincing the High Commissioner of the initiative’s importance and ensuring that the festival project was incorporated as part of the discussions in relation to the ‘Seventh Plan’ in 1974.²⁴ As a result of these discussions (in which representatives from the Kanak community took part for the first time, within a special commission named *Promotion et Développement*),²⁵ the festival project and the creation of the *Comité pour le développement* were included in the final proposals presented to the New Caledonian Territorial Assembly by Jacques Iékawé, a Kanak from the island of Tiga who was working at a high level within the Territorial administration and who would be a key member of *Mélanésie 2000*’s Organising Committee.²⁶ Following the unanimous acceptance of these proposals by the Territorial Assembly,²⁷ the *Comité pour le développement* was created in mid-1974 with the ‘appui personnel’ of the High Commissioner, Jean-Gabriel Eriau.²⁸

²⁴ Waddell (2008: 83). See also Levallois (1995: 126); Missotte (1995b: 63); Tjibaou (1996: 39).

²⁵ Tjibaou himself was among those involved. See Levallois (1995: 126); Missotte (1995b: 63); Tjibaou (1996: 39); ‘DES OBJECTIFS CONCRETS DE PROMOTION : LES MELANESIENS DISENT CE QU’ILS VEULENT’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 18/07/1974, 4; ‘L’INSERTION DES MÉLANÉSIENS DANS LA VIE ÉCONOMIQUE : HABITAT ET EMPLOI AU CENTRE DES PRÉOCCUPATIONS’, *La France Australe*, 18/07/1974, 3-4; ‘UN COMITÉ POUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT ou la promotion d’un développement humain, culturel, économique et social’, *La France Australe*, 25/07/1974, 5.

²⁶ Levallois (1995: 126); Missotte (1995b: 63); Waddell (2008: 83). The festival and the *Comité pour le développement* were mentioned in LNC’s coverage of Iékawé’s report, but not in the coverage published by LFA: ‘DES OBJECTIFS CONCRETS DE PROMOTION : LES MELANESIENS DISENT CE QU’ILS VEULENT’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 18/07/1974, 4; ‘L’INSERTION DES MÉLANÉSIENS DANS LA VIE ÉCONOMIQUE : HABITAT ET EMPLOI AU CENTRE DES PRÉOCCUPATIONS’, *La France Australe*, 18/07/1974, 3-4. However, the previous day LFA had published a lengthy, detailed article on the festival project: ‘MELANESIA 2000 – FESTIVAL D’EXPRESSION MÉLANÉSIENNE EN 1975’, *La France Australe*, 17/07/1974, 8-9. Note that Iékawé’s precise position within the Territorial administration is identified differently in several articles published at or around this time by the two daily newspapers.

²⁷ The headline on the front page of LNC ran: ‘DES OBJECTIFS CONCRETS POUR LA PROMOTION MELANESIENNE : LE RAPPORT IEKAWE A CONQUIS L’ASSEMBLEE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 18/07/1974, 1.

²⁸ Levallois (1995: 127). See also Missotte (1995: 95). Eriau authored the preface to the *Mélanésie 2000*’s Festival Program: J.G. Eriau, ‘Préface’, in Bonnabesse and Missotte (1975: 3).

According to Missotte, the initial intention had been to create three structures within the *Comité pour le développement* to manage the festival project: ‘*un Comité d’honneur ou de parrainage composé de personnalités et notables du Territoire, un Comité d’organisation et des commissions de travail.*’²⁹ However, the idea of the first Committee was ultimately abandoned because ‘*sa composition eut donnée [sic] au Festival un aspect politicien.*’³⁰ This further illustrates the desire of the festival’s primary organisers to present the event as having an external position in relation to the domain of partisan politics.

In his initial 1974 text and his 1975 text published in the Festival Program, Tjibaou affirmed the sincerity of the project’s non-Kanak collaborators, stating in this connection that:

*parmi les Français calédoniens et métropolitains, il existe un courant de pensée qui reconnaît sincèrement que la promotion culturelle autochtone est une donnée essentielle d’un développement harmonieux du Territoire.*³¹

However, the motivations attributed in 1975 by the militant anti-colonial Kanak student groups to the administration’s support for *Mélanésie 2000* were radically different from those suggested by Tjibaou in this passage (as well as from the shared political perspective and engagement affirmed by Levallois, discussed above).³² Rather, the support of the ‘colonial’ administration for the festival was imputed by these groups to political motivations of a highly cynical, manipulative, exploitative and oppressive nature. This was, moreover, one of the key reasons for the opposition advocated by these groups in relation to *Mélanésie 2000* (discussed in Chapter One).

The festival’s Organising Committee gradually distilled to a composition of 33 members, only three of whom were non-Kanak: Philippe Missotte, Gilbert Barrillon and another Metropolitan public servant, Yves Tissandier (who was the only non-Kanak to head a ‘*commission de travail*’ – that of ‘public relations’, responsible notably for

²⁹ Missotte (1995b: 73).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Tjibaou in Missotte (1995b: 67); Jean-Marie Tjibaou, ‘Présentation par J.M. Tjibaou, Président du Comité’, in Bonnabesse and Missotte (1975: 6).

³² They also differed from the motivations stemming from a shared Western Christian humanitarianism posited by Waddell – see Waddell (2008: 81-83).

relaying information on the festival project to the local media).³³ The Organising Committee did, however, employ a number of Metropolitan theatre and events professionals, including particularly Georges Dobbelaere and Alain Tartas, who travelled to New Caledonia to facilitate the realisation of the main festival and its *jeu scénique*.³⁴ The Kanak members of the festival's Organising Committee were comprised of men and women from throughout the *Grande Terre* and the Loyalty Islands. The majority of these individuals were also actively engaged in various non-governmental Kanak associations (including those discussed above).³⁵

As indicated previously, Tjibaou's own professional and personal connections to such associations and to the various interrelating networks (including notably in the overlapping religious, political and 'customary' domains) is identified by the majority of commentators as having played a central role in the realisation of *Mélanésie 2000*.³⁶ Mokaddem thus affirms in this connection that, within his particular '*constellation*' of networks, Tjibaou '*tisse des liens avec des personnes dont les positions sociales, coutumières, politiques ou administratives vont jouer un rôle décisif*.'³⁷

The mobilisation of various, specifically Kanak networks appears to have allowed the festival's organisers to realise to a significant extent the goals of uniting groups of Kanak people from throughout the archipelago for *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival and of transcending some of the major cleavages that had structured and delimited earlier pan-Kanak gatherings. Those cleavages included particularly some of the divisions between certain groups of Catholics and Protestants, between Kanak people politically

³³ Missotte (1985: 440). The election of the '*bureau directeur*' and the creation of the various '*commissions de travail et d'organisation*' within the festival's Organising Committee were covered in almost identical terms by LNC and LFA in two articles which were presumably based on information or a press release provided to by the Organising Committee itself: 'PREMIER FESTIVAL DES ARTS MÉLANÉSIENS commissions de travail', *La France Australe*, 21/08/1974, 16; 'LE PREMIER FESTIVAL DES ARTS MELANESIENS S'ORGANISE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 21/08/1974, 1, 3.

³⁴ Philippe Henry and Michel Chevillon also travelled to New Caledonia from Metropolitan France to work as Dobbelaere's assistants in realising the *jeu scénique*: 'DEUX MEMBRES D'« ANIMATION JEUNESSE » A NOUMEA', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/08/1975, 6. Pierre Bernard, a Metropolitan 'electro-acoustique' musician, was employed by the Organising Committee to create the '*bande sonore*' for the *jeu scénique*. See particularly 'la musique de pierre bernard', in Bonnabesse and Missotte (1975: 22). See also Dobbelaere (1995: 106).

³⁵ Missotte (1985: 441); Missotte (1995b: 73).

³⁶ On this point see, for example, Guiart (1996: 100, 107); Mokaddem (2005a: 125-154); Trépiéd (2007: 619-620); Waddell (2008: 79).

³⁷ Mokaddem (2005a: 128). See also Guiart (1996: 107).

aligned with the UC and those aligned with the conservative, right-wing local political parties, and between people from different geographical regions, walks of life, age groups and sexes.³⁸

Two additional Kanak associations and networks to those discussed above appear to have played a particularly important role in this regard: the *Union des Indigènes Calédoniens Amis de la Liberté dans l'Ordre* (UICALO) and the *Association des Indigènes Calédoniens et Loyaltiens Français* (AICLF).³⁹ Trépied highlights the inscription of the UICALO and the AICLF within Kanak 'customary' networks and modalities, which he refers to as Kanak '*répertoires vernaculaires du politique*'.⁴⁰ Following a number of authors, Trépied also maintains that Tjibaou's personal implication in Kanak religious networks and structures, and his close collaboration during this period with several '*notables historiques*' of the UICALO and the AICLF, produced:

*un effet de continuité entre les projets de Jean-Marie Tjibaou au début des années soixante-dix et le réformisme modéré de l'UC hérité de l'UICALO et l'AICLF, malgré la signification politique inédite – pour la restauration de la dignité kanak et contre l'aliénation coloniale – dont l'ancien prêtre parait les actions du « Souriant Village Mélanésien ».*⁴¹

Decades after the creation of the UICALO and the AICLF, the approach and initiatives of Tjibaou in the first half of the 1970s, exemplified by and culminating in *Mélanésie 2000* itself, can indeed be seen to have followed these two associations in pursuing and

³⁸ Missotte highlights the unique character of *Mélanésie 2000* in this respect in his doctoral thesis, suggesting that the main festival constituted the first occasion during which Kanak groups representing '*toutes les régions*' of both the *Grande Terre* and the Loyalty islands met together in the same place, at the same time, and in such numbers. Missotte (1985: 460).

³⁹ The Catholic UICALO and the Protestant AICLF were similar associations, formed in 1946 and 1947 respectively, during the period which saw the progressive acquisition by Kanak 'subjects' of French 'citizenship' and the right to vote subsequent to World War II. In an attempt to circumvent the growing influence of the *Parti Communiste Calédonien* within Kanak communities at that time, the Catholic and Protestant missionaries created these two Kanak associations, which served to reinforce the influence of religious notables and institutions within those Kanak communities. As noted by Trépied, these associations '*avaient pris en charge l'entrée en politique des Mélanésiens*', and would together form the principal electoral base of a new political party, the *Union Calédonienne*, created in 1953 by its leader, Maurice Lenormand, along with a relatively small group of other local 'Europeans' and the Kanak leaders of the UICALO and the AICLF. See Trépied (2007: 138-141, 145, 620).

⁴⁰ Trépied (2007: 139, 774). See also Trépied (2012, forthcoming); Guiart (1996: 107); and the discussion in Chapter One.

⁴¹ Trépied (2007: 620-621).

realising the (re)activation of such specifically Kanak '*répertoires vernaculaires du politique*', engaging various Kanak networks and modes of socio-political interaction and thereby working, in Mokaddem's terms, to '*reconstituer le lien politique kanak*.'⁴²

From the perspective of *Mélanésie 2000*'s organisers, the transmission of the message and objectives of the festival throughout the Kanak communities of the *Grande Terre* and the Islands '*selon les règles de la communication canaque*' consequently had particular importance.⁴³ In *Kanaké, Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Tjibaou and Missotte thus characterised this process in the following terms: '[d]e clan en clan, de sentier coutumier en sentier coutumier, pendant plus d'un an, circula cette parole de résurrection.'⁴⁴

The Organising Committee's '*démarche coutumière*'

The '*démarche coutumière*' adopted by the Organising Committee encompassed the preparation and organisation of *Mélanésie 2000* (including through the regional mini-festivals) and the realisation of the main festival itself. In the period of the main festival's preparation, the '*démarche coutumière*' can be seen to have encompassed the following primary aspects: the circulation, via the appropriate '*sentiers coutumiers*', of '*la parole*' of the Organising Committee and the engagement of Kanak support for and participation in the festival project; obtaining the necessary 'customary' permissions for and approval of the performance of particular 'traditional' dances and other cultural forms and items; the organisation and realisation of the regional mini-festivals; and the preparation of the main festival site, including the construction of a large number of 'traditional' Kanak *cases*. The culmination of this '*démarche coutumière*' was the September main festival and the 'customary' ceremonies conducted immediately before, during and after that event.

The character of the '*démarche coutumière*' adopted by the Organising Committee in organising *Mélanésie 2000* within New Caledonia's Kanak population can be seen to have had particular importance for several reasons. In the first instance, at a practical

⁴² Mokaddem (2005a: 123).

⁴³ Missotte (1995b: 71).

⁴⁴ Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 32).

level, this process was a central means of engaging with the Kanak population in relation to the *Mélanésie 2000* project and engendering Kanak community support for and participation in the festival-related events and processes.⁴⁵ The importance of a high level of Kanak awareness of and involvement in the festival project was itself a function of *Mélanésie 2000*'s particular objectives (discussed further in Chapter One).⁴⁶

Inscribing the festival in a '*démarche coutumière*' can also be identified as having been centrally important from the perspective of *Mélanésie 2000*'s organisers as a means of both ensuring the specifically Kanak character of the event and of reactivating and revalorising the specifically Kanak modes of agency and interaction engaged through the festival's organisation and realisation. This aspect of the festival project might consequently be viewed as countering the criticisms articulated by various radical Kanak groups of *Mélanésie 2000* as a superficial, folkloric and 'inauthentic' performance and event for an external, non-Kanak audience (discussed in Chapter One). However, one element of the criticisms articulated by these groups directly concerned the purported instrumental use and manipulation of Kanak 'customary' authorities and structures by the festival's organisers (and so, in the perspective of these radical groups, by the 'colonial' administration) in realising the festival and its posited aim of further consolidating and perpetuating the colonial domination and exploitation of the Kanak people.

The critical position expressed in 1995 by Fote Trolue serves as a particularly useful counterpoint to the view that *Mélanésie 2000* engendered the reactivation and revalorisation of specifically Kanak '*répertoires vernaculaires du politique*' and therefore 'reconstituted' the '*lien politique kanak*.' In explaining the criticism of *Mélanésie 2000* articulated in 1975 by the radical Kanak student groups (of which he was a member), Trolue emphasises the view held by those groups that 'culture' needed to be mobilised explicitly as '*une arme politique*'.⁴⁷ Trolue continues:

[n]e parler que de culture c'est contribuer à mieux endormir les gens.

L'Eglise, institution qui a un poids énorme, a utilisé, surtout l'Eglise

⁴⁵ See the '*témoignage*' of Joseph Caihe: Trolue and Caihe (1995: 154).

⁴⁶ For example, Missotte maintains in this regard that '*Mélanésie 2000 devait être l'expression du plus grand nombre possible. Qu'ils viennent sur les lieux ou non au moment du festival, plus ils seraient nombreux à vivre la démarche, plus intense serait la prise de conscience.*' Missotte (1995b: 70).

⁴⁷ Trolue and Caihe (1995: 161).

*protestante, les sentiers coutumiers pour mieux asseoir sa propre logique et son propre dogme, mais elle n'a pas du tout réveillé le kanak pour avoir une attitude critique face au dogme religieux, et face au politique on s'est demandé s'il n'y a pas eu une même attitude, plus religieuse que politique.*⁴⁸

However, from the perspective of *Mélanésie 2000*'s organisers, it appears that the adoption of a '*démarche coutumière*' was an essential means of both communicating and, to an extent, enacting and realising the political message and objectives of *Mélanésie 2000* in relation to the Kanak community. Indeed, by means of that '*démarche coutumière*', *Mélanésie 2000* was in part aimed at counteracting the progressive disintegration, abandonment and marginalisation of 'traditional' Kanak society and Kanak 'customary' authorities (linked, in the perspective of Tjibaou and the Organising Committee, to the contemporary Kanak '*crise d'identité*').⁴⁹

Moreover, and notwithstanding that aim, the particular '*démarche coutumière*' engaged through the festival project was necessarily novel in comparison to the well-established 'customary' formulations used in relation to familiar events (such as those associated with births, deaths and marriages). As noted in Chapter One, a pan-Kanak gathering and cultural festival event such as *Mélanésie 2000* was itself novel, and it was consequently necessary to rearticulate Kanak 'custom' in such a way as to accommodate this new situation. Tjibaou thus acknowledged in an interview in 1977 that: '*[l]e festival tel qu'on l'a imaginé, cela n'est prévu nulle part dans la coutume : un tel rassemblement, en un laps de temps donné, précis, très court.*'⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Tjibaou also emphasised in the same interview that the novelty of *Mélanésie 2000* did not lie in the sense or meaning of the 'customary' exchanges and ceremonies performed in preparation of or during the main festival, but in the nature of:

⁴⁸ Trolue and Caihe (1995: 161).

⁴⁹ This was highlighted by Tjibaou in an interview in relation to *Mélanésie 2000* in 1977: Tjibaou (1996: 36-37). The posited positive impact of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival in this regard was emphasised in an article published in the festival's official newspaper in the following terms: '*[c]e qu'il y a d'extraordinaire disent certains c'est en fait ce que l'on ne voit pas. C'est la redécouverte par beaucoup, d'un geste ou d'un fait. C'est la sensibilisation à des actes coutumiers dont on se souvient plus très bien.*' 'Site et cases', *Mélanésie : journal du festival*, no. 3, September 1975, 5, reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 of Chapter 5, 99).

⁵⁰ Tjibaou (1996: 41).

*la rencontre elle-même, parce qu'elle est unique, qu'elle n'a jamais été réalisé dans l'histoire, parce qu'il n'y a jamais eu l'occasion ni les moyens de rassembler, à travers la coutume, en temps aussi court, des gens [Kanak] d'horizons si divers.*⁵¹

Consequently, as well as purportedly reactivating, revalorising and reinforcing Kanak 'custom', Kanak 'customary' authorities and Kanak 'customary' '*sentiers*' between different Kanak communities, *Mélanésie 2000* might be viewed as having brought about a reformulation of Kanak 'custom', itself conceived and mobilised through the festival as a dynamic system, adaptable to novel and changing contemporary contexts.

As indicated in Chapter One, in addition to potentially reactivating Kanak 'customary' paths and networks, *Mélanésie 2000* has been identified by certain commentators and participants as having extended those 'customary' paths and networks in producing a new sense or consciousness (and therefore reality) of pan-Kanak unity. This posited result is generally associated with the unprecedented scope and scale of the festival and the desire of the Organising Committee to transcend cleavages between Kanak communities (including those produced by religion, politics, geography, 'custom', and so on) so as to unite the Kanak population as a whole behind and through the festival project, particularly through the engagement of a '*démarche coutumière*'. For example, Mokaddem commented in 2005 in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*:

*[l]'objectif est aussi de renouer les liens kanak et de construire une identité en mouvement. Les gestes « coutumiers » entre tous les pays kanak permirent des tissages de liens sociaux [...]. La parole, dans l'univers social kanak, enveloppe d'autres paroles et harmonise les voix pour faire place à une voix, celle du peuple kanak : « La Parole circulait, le peuple canaque vivait. »*⁵²

⁵¹ Ibid., 44. In an interview in 2006, Déwé Gorodé acknowledged the political aspect (from a Kanak perspective) of the '*démarche culturelle kanak*' (related to what she refers to as the Kanak '*lien social*', correlating to what is often referred to as Kanak 'custom') adopted by Tjibaou in realising *Mélanésie 2000*. However, Gorodé also emphasised in this regard that: '*peut-être pour un regard extérieur c'est quelque chose de nouveau, mais en réalité ce n'est pas nouveau dans notre culture parce que notre vision du monde est globale. [...] Nous avons une vision d'ensemble. Il n'y a pas vraiment de fissure entre les choses.*' Brown (2008: 551).

⁵² Mokaddem (2005a: 137). The citation in the last sentence is attributed to Marie-Claude Tjibaou in 1995. Mokaddem's representation of '*la parole*' in connection to *Mélanésie 2000* in this passage might be contrasted to an understanding of 'consensual' Kanak discourses articulated in specific contexts as being designed to mask past and present socio-political divisions and to advance particular socio-political

Writing in 1995 in his capacity as the Director of the *Agence de Développement de la Culture Kanak* (ADCK), in the period leading up to the inauguration of the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou* and the end of the Matignon Accords agreement,⁵³ Octave Togna similarly maintained:

*1975 et Mélanésie 2000 ont bousculé l'ensemble des kanak. A travers plus d'un an de mobilisation et les chemins coutumiers suivis, nous avons retrouvé notre place par rapport à l'ensemble des clans de la Grande-Terre et des Iles. Les chemins coutumiers ont été ravivés, ce qui a permis de prendre conscience que nous étions nombreux, que nous étions d'ici, et chez nous !*⁵⁴

Togna goes on to affirm in relation to *Mélanésie 2000* that:

*Jean-Marie Tjibaou savait très bien où il allait : à travers l'affirmation de la dignité de la culture, c'était la première pierre de la revendication politique qui était posée. Les "indigènes", les "autochtones", les "mélanésiens", comme on nous appelait, prenaient conscience de pouvoir faire partie d'une communauté unique : le peuple kanak.*⁵⁵

Mélanésie 2000 has often been identified retrospectively in this manner as the point at which such a consciousness of Kanak unity and of a shared Kanak identity, itself identified as crucial to the formation of the Kanak independence movement in the political domain, first emerged.

This view is not, however, uncontested. For example, in an interview in 2006, Déwé Gorodé (who had opposed the festival in 1975 as a member of the *Groupe 1878*) identifies rather the 18 November 1984 and the boycott of the Territorial elections as having been the '*point de départ d'une conscience politique [kanak]*' with a '*vraie dimension nationaliste*'.⁵⁶ Certain similarities are apparent between Gorodé's

ends and interests, as variously highlighted by, amongst others, Guiart (1996: 101, 110); Naepels (1998); Bensa (1995a: 296-297, 299); and Mokaddem himself: Mokaddem (2009: 54-55).

⁵³ Togna's discourse in relation to Jean-Marie Tjibaou and *Mélanésie 2000* needs to be considered in light of that specific context – see Chapter Two.

⁵⁴ Togna (1995: 5).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Brown (2008: 550). However, as noted previously, Gorodé nevertheless acknowledges in this interview that '*la culture et la politique s'achoppent*', and that Tjibaou's '*démarche culturelle kanak*', being inscribed within the '*politique des chefferies*' and Kanak 'custom', itself effectively had a particular political dimension: Brown (2008: 550-551).

perspective and that articulated in 1995 by Trolue.⁵⁷ Trolue maintains in relation to *Mélanésie 2000* that, while the message of the festival was ultimately political, by reason of the implicit way in which that political message was conveyed it was not understood by the Kanak people involved: *'d'un côté il y a un message politique et de l'autre les gens ne perçoivent qu'un message culturel.'*⁵⁸ Consequently, the 1975 festival is not identified by Trolue as having given rise to the unity of the Kanak people, defined by him as inherently both cultural and political. Moreover, Trolue maintains that:

*[o]n parle d'unité du peuple kanak, on dénonce des « combines » qui tente de briser cette unité, mais peut-on briser quelque chose qui n'a pas encore existé ? Alors qu'avec les événements, les Kanak ont commencé à jeter les bases de leur unité, le phénomène de la récupération politique de leur culture ne les a-t-il pas replongés dans leurs tours d'ivoire claniques ?*⁵⁹

Nevertheless, as can be seen from the above discussion, all commentators appear to acknowledge that *Mélanésie 2000*'s Organising Committee aimed to follow Kanak 'customary' paths and to use certain Kanak 'customary' networks in the organisation and realisation of the festival, which consequently gave rise to a process and an event grouping and linking a significant number of Kanak communities compared to previous gatherings. The position of Tjibaou (and, indeed, of other members of the Organising Committee) within or in relation to various established Kanak networks and structures, including the UICALO, the AICLF and the *Mouvement féminin pour un souriant village mélanésien*, can thus be seen to have played a vital role in the *Mélanésie 2000* project far beyond the role this also played in facilitating the practical organisation of the mini-festivals and the regional delegations sent to the main festival in September.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Trolue and Caihe (1995: 153-164).

⁵⁸ Ibid., 161. See also *ibid.*, 156-163.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 157.

⁶⁰ Missotte highlights the role played by various Church networks, including AICLF and UICALO, which *'assurèrent un relais important'* in the process of organising the festival: Missotte (1995b: 71); and see also Guiart (1996: 101, 104). Tjibaou's personal connections to the AICLF (including notably through his father-in-law, Doui Matayo Wetta, who was the Association's Secretary-General), as well as to the UICALO (with which he and his family were affiliated and which was presided by Roch Pidjot), appear to have facilitated the process of gaining the support of these two associations, thereby enabling the mobilisation of the Kanak networks formed by them. On these points, see Tjibaou in Violette (1989: 27); Mokaddem (2005a: 128, 154); Trépied (2007: 619-622). The strong links between the Organising

Tjibaou and other members of the festival's Organising Committee were personally implicated in the '*démarche coutumière*' pursued in the preparation and realisation of *Mélanésia 2000*. Indeed, the '*parole*' transmitted via the appropriate '*sentiers coutumiers*' to Kanak communities throughout the archipelago (whether directly by Organising Committee members or through intermediaries such as the individuals employed by the Committee as '*animateurs*') was that of the Organising Committee and its members. And it was this same '*parole*' that was ultimately returned to the Organising Committee during the opening ceremony of the main festival in September.⁶¹

As noted in Chapter One, a key position and role in relation to the main festival was accorded by *Mélanésia 2000*'s Organising Committee to the 'customary' representatives of the Kanak groups from '*le Sud*', who effectively acted in the role of the 'customary' '*maîtres de la terre*' in relation to the main-festival site (being located in that geographical region).

The overall conception of the type of interaction to take place during *Mélanésia 2000*'s main festival – as a meeting, rather than a show or performance⁶² – directly informed the approach adopted by the Organising Committee in relation to the organisation of the main-festival site, which covered a total area of six hectares, on loan from the Municipality of Noumea.⁶³ Consequently, the site of the main festival was designed with a largely decentralised structure around nine autonomous *points soleil*, each designated as representing and housing Kanak participant delegations from different

Committee (particularly through Scholastique Pidjot and Jean-Marie Tjibaou) and the network formed by the *Mouvement féminin pour un souriant village mélanésien* were also particularly important in enabling the successful organisation and realisation of *Mélanésia 2000*: Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 28-31); Dobbelaere (1995: 105-106, 108); Missotte (1995b: 90); Marie-Claude Tjibaou (1995: 117); Tjibaou (1996: 38-39). Beyond the practical and organisational contributions of the women of this association and their involvement as participants in the mini-festivals and the September main festival (including as performers in the main festival's *jeu scénique*), Mokaddem identifies this women's network as having been particularly significant in relation to the '*démarche coutumière*' adopted by *Mélanésia 2000*'s organisers: see Mokaddem (2005a: 134).

⁶¹ On this process, see 'CÉRÉMONIE D'OUVERTURE DU FESTIVAL : La parole n'est pas tombée...', *Mélanesia : journal du festival*, no. 1, September 1975, 3, reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 81); 'L'accueil. Le sud reçoit', *Mélanesia : journal du festival*, no. 3, September 1975, 2, reproduced in (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 96); Missotte (1995b: 71, 85-86).

⁶² Tjibaou and Missotte thus identify the main festival as having been conceived as a '[r]encontre plus que spectacle': Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 36). See also Missotte (1995: 70).

⁶³ Missotte (1995: 77); 'LE CONSEIL MUNICIPAL a visité les installations de MELANESIA 2000', *La France Australe*, 13/08/1975, 4.

geographical and cultural regions.⁶⁴ However, a particular position was accorded to the '*Grande Case du Sud*', situated at the end of the large central meeting/performance area on which the opening and closing ceremonies took place (as well as various performances and activities throughout the festival).⁶⁵ These public opening and closing ceremonies incorporated certain elements of the inter-Kanak 'customary' ceremonies and exchanges necessitated by the Organising Committee's '*démarche coutumière*', although the majority of the associated 'customary' ceremonies were conducted 'in private' – that is, in the presence of the particular individuals and groups directly implicated in the 'customary' ceremonies in question.

The 'customary' role performed by the representatives of '*le Sud*', acting as the '*maîtres de la terre*' in relation to the main-festival site, was designed to establish and legitimise the main festival from a 'traditional' Kanak perspective in relation to: the physical implantation and occupation of the Kanak participant delegations on the site – a process which revolved around the construction and occupation of the 'traditional' Kanak *cases* thereon; the festival's overall aims accepted collectively by all of the festival's Kanak participants; and the conferral of responsibility for the pursuit of those aims through the festival on the Organising Committee, resulting in the 'return' of the '*parole*' initiated and circulated throughout the Territory by the Committee from 1974.⁶⁶ This '*démarche coutumière*' can be seen to have imbued *Mélanésie 2000* with significant political implications in relation to Kanak 'sovereignty' at both a 'local' and a 'national' level, as discussed in Chapter One.

On a number of occasions, the Organising Committee emphasised in its public discourse the link between Kanak culture and identity, on the one hand, and Kanak

⁶⁴ See Bonnabesse and Missotte (1975: 11); Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 36); Missotte (1995b: 70, 77). In the lead up to the main festival, teams from each of the regional delegations that would be involved in the main festival travelled to the main-festival site to construct one or more 'traditional' *cases* (in many cases, both a '*grande case*' and a '*case d'habitation*') at their respective *points soleil*.

⁶⁵ Adjoining this central area was a number of shared facilities and constructions, including the communal 'restaurant' and exhibition space. See the map of the festival site and the main-festival program in the Festival Program: Bonnabesse and Missotte (1975: 10-13). Missotte highlights that this *Grande Case du Sud* was situated '[à] l'extrémité de la place centrale du Festival, constituée par le fond de la vallée, face à l'entrée par laquelle on pénétrait dans le site du Festival', and so occupied '*une place assez semblable à celle qu'occupe les Grandes cases [traditionnelles], au bout de l'allée*': Missotte (1995b: 83).

⁶⁶ See 'CÉRÉMONIE D'OUVERTURE DU FESTIVAL : La parole n'est pas tombée...', *Mélanésie : journal du festival*, no. 1, September 1975, 3, reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 81); 'L'accueil. Le sud reçoit', *Mélanésie : journal du festival*, no. 3, September 1975, 2, reproduced in (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 96); Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 36); Missotte (1995b: 77, 83-85).

lands, on the other. For example, in the ethnographic text published at the end of the Festival Program, entitled '*Le mythe dans la société canaque*', Tjibaou affirms in relation to the 'traditional' Kanak conception of and relationship to the land that '*[l] n'y a pas d'espace vide ou de terres vierges dans cet univers*', and emphasises that '*[l]'espace ainsi conçu n'est pas objectif car il est le tissu tout imprégné du réseau de relations des humains*', being '*un des éléments fondamentaux constituant la personnalité canaque*' and '*un des aspect [sic] essentiels du mythe*.'⁶⁷ An article in the festival newspaper in relation to '*la terre*' also clearly affirms strong, indeed, unbreakable Kanak links to the land: '*[l]'appartenance (de l'homme à la terre et de la terre à l'homme) est inconditionnelle et inséparable*.'⁶⁸ However, during *Mélanésie 2000*'s organisation and realisation, this Kanak perspective does not appear to have been directly linked in the public discourse of the festival's Organising Committee to the question of the 'ownership' of the main-festival site itself, nor, indeed, to any broader questions of Kanak (political) 'sovereignty' in New Caledonia.

As discussed in further detail in Annex 1, in 1975, the physical occupation of lands by Kanak groups was yet to emerge as part of a commonly engaged strategy for their *revendication*. Moreover, only in the following years would those *revendications* and the strategy of occupation (often involving the construction of a symbolic 'traditional' *case*) become closely associated with the emergence and crystallisation of the political movement for Kanak independence.

The 'subversive' character of the *revendication* of Kanak lands and their occupation (particularly when this was done outside of any established legal structures, such as the land reform regimes successively instituted from 1978)⁶⁹ in relation to the established politico-juridical and economic order is readily apparent, particularly when one considers that the legitimacy of such Kanak claims and actions necessarily lies in the illegitimacy of the contemporary juridical order and status quo in relation to land ownership founded on Kanak colonial dispossession. This 'subversive' character is particularly apparent in the case of the Noumea area, where the main-festival site was

⁶⁷ Tjibaou (1975: 36). Very similar statements also appear in Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 60-62).

⁶⁸ 'la terre', *Mélanésie: journal du festival*, no. 2, September 1975, 6, reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 2).

⁶⁹ See Louis Mapou (1999a).

located, given that the capital city effectively represents the geographical and symbolic 'heart' of colonial/French/non-Kanak presence, wealth and dominance in New Caledonia.⁷⁰ Consequently, particularly in the context of lands in the Noumea area (but also in the context of any non-Kanak 'owned' lands throughout the archipelago), it is a relatively small step from the *revendication* of a specific area of land by a specific group dispossessed through colonisation to the collective *revendication* of sovereignty and political independence by Kanak people as the indigenous people of the country conceived as a whole.

However, as indicated in Chapter One, *Mélanésie 2000* itself, including the Kanak 'occupation' of the main-festival site, was never explicitly inscribed in or linked to this emerging dynamic of land (and political) *revendication*.

⁷⁰ On the other hand, it is also potentially symbolically significant that the main-festival site, situated on the Tina Peninsula, was located on the very outskirts of the capital city, in contrast to the original site proposed by the Organising Committee (but rejected by the Municipality) on Nouville – a 'presqu'île' joined to the mainland almost at the city's very centre: see Missotte (1985: 442, footnote 32); 'L'U.I.C.A.L.O. et l'organisation du Festival « MELANESIA 2000 »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/05/1975, 5; 'U.I.C.A.L.O. ET L'ORGANISATION DU FESTIVAL « MÉLANÉSIA 2000 »', *La France Australe*, 22/05/1975, 5.

ANNEX 3

Political message of *Mélanésie 2000's jeu scénique*

The broad composition and message of the *jeu scénique* were originally conceived and determined by Tjibaou and the Organising Committee.¹ It is divided into three 'tableaux', entitled respectively '*Le Boenando*', '*La conquête*' and '*Le partage des ignames*'.² As noted by Brown, this tripartite division follows '*la logique de la tradition de la dialectique philosophique occidentale: affirmation, négation, réaffirmation intégrée*',³ a logic transposed into three broad historico-temporal categories in the *jeu scénique*: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial.

On Dobbelaere's account, while the last two *tableaux* '*relève d'une certain forme de théâtre contemporain*', the first '*relève d'une démarche culturelle complètement différente*'.⁴ As noted by Missotte, three specific 'traditional' Kanak ceremonies – '*la levée du deuil d'un chef coutumier avec le retour des deuilés, l'initiation des jeunes gens et enfin, l'investiture d'un chef nouveau*'⁵ – are condensed and represented together in the first *tableau*, which depicts Kanak 'culture', society and life before the arrival of Europeans in a '*célébration traditionnelle stylisée*'.⁶ The written text of this first *tableau* and the oral text as it was recorded on the '*bande sonore*' and played during the two performances of the *jeu scénique* appear to have been the product of a

¹ See Missotte (1995b: 89); Dobbelaere (1995: 102); 'UN SPECIALISTE DES GRANDES MISES EN SCENE POUR « MELANESIA 2000 »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/05/1975, 8; 'L'avocat du diable à cœur ouvert avec : Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 5. Note that, according to Guiart, Doui Matayo Wetta also played a substantial role in the conception of the *jeu scénique* and its message, particularly by reason of Tjibaou's reliance on Wetta's Kanak networks and connections for the organisation of the festival project. Indeed, Guiart argues that Tjibaou's reliance on the AICLF and Wetta '*explique au moins en partie le rôle crucial joué par ce dernier dans la conception et l'écriture du jeu scénique, et le choix de Téin Kanaké comme figure emblématique de la culture canaque*.' Guiart (1996: 104).

² Dobbelaere and Tjibaou (1975: 24-32).

³ Brown (2008: 546). See also Missotte (1985: 467). Mokaddem also highlights the dialectical nature of Tjibaou's approach in organising *Mélanésie 2000* as a whole: see Mokaddem (2005a: 136). See also Mokaddem (2009: 65, 72, 95).

⁴ Dobbelaere (1995: 102).

⁵ Missotte (1985: 467-468).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 467. Note that Dobbelaere also acknowledges this 'concentration' in the *jeu scénique* of a series of specific ceremonies which would have 'traditionally' taken place in succession over some period of time: see Dobbelaere (1995: 102-103, 106-107).

number of collaborations between various individuals, each drawing on different sets of oral and written resources and knowledge bases.⁷ In contrast, the ‘authorship’ of the second and third *tableaux* was relatively straight forward and can be attributed primarily to Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Georges Dobbelaere. In the Festival Program, the written text of the *jeu scénique* as a whole is, moreover, attributed to Tjibaou and Dobbelaere, with the translation into the Kanak language of *Paicî* of passages in the first *tableau* being attributed to Doui Matayo Wetta.⁸ Dobbelaere can also be identified as having been responsible for the direction of the *jeu scénique*.⁹

The ‘*boenando*’ of the first scene is effectively set in the *Paicî* culturo-linguistic region, although there is considerable fluidity in the *jeu scénique* between the representation of the regional, on the one hand, and of the archipelago or country as a whole, on the other. For example, the first *tableau* opens with ‘*l’appel des clans*’,¹⁰ a sequence which was, on the direction of Tjibaou and the Organising Committee, given a ‘national’,¹¹ pan-Kanak dimension beyond the scene’s *Paicî* setting through the representation and constitution of each ‘clan’ by Kanak groups from different regions of the *Grande Terre* and the Islands.¹²

On the other hand, the *Paicî* setting of the *jeu scénique* is reinforced by the ‘*généalogie*’¹³ pronounced in the first *tableau* by the newly invested *chef* (who is the *jeu*

⁷ These individuals included particularly Jean-Marie Tjibaou, Georges Dobbelaere, Doui Matayo Wetta and Emmanuel Naouna. Among the resources they drew upon were living Kanak oral traditions and knowledge, as well as certain sources written in French, such as works by Maurice Leenhardt and Jean Guiart.

⁸ See Dobbelaere and Tjibaou (1975: 15).

⁹ See *ibid*; Missotte (1995b: 88); Dobbelaere (1995: 101-108); ‘UN SPECIALISTE DES GRANDES MISES EN SCENE POUR « MELANESIA 2000 »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/05/1975, 8; ‘L’avocat du diable à cœur ouvert avec : Jean-Marie Tjibaou’, *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 5.

¹⁰ Dobbelaere and Tjibaou (1975: 24).

¹¹ This term is used by Dobbelaere in his 1995 ‘*témoignage*’: Dobbelaere (1995: 102).

¹² Dobbelaere (1995: 102, 104). As highlighted by Missotte, this constituted ‘*une licence théâtrale par rapport à la réalité ancienne, il est en effet peu probable, même si les contacts entre Grande Terre et Iles étaient fréquents, qu’une telle rencontre aussi « cosmopolite » ait eu lieu*’: Missotte (1995b: 90). See also ‘UN SPECIALISTE DES GRANDES MISES EN SCENE POUR « MELANESIA 2000 »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/05/1975, 8.

¹³ This term is used in the text of the *jeu scénique* itself and in *Kanaké, Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie*, although in the later work this ‘*discours sur le bois*’ is also identified as a ‘*récit mythique*’. See Dobbelaere and Tjibaou (1975: 27); Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 9-10, 42). See also the discussion on this point in Bensa (1995b: 130).

scénique's main protagonist), as well as by the identity of the *chef* himself as 'Kanaké'. Kanaké is an important figure in one *Paicî* foundational 'myth',¹⁴ according to which he is the '*frère aîné*' of all men, being the first man to have come into existence.¹⁵ The figure of Kanaké is also constructed as central in *Kanaké, Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie*, the book written by Tjibaou and Missotte and first published in 1976 which elaborates on the *Mélanésie 2000* project's rationale and realisation and seeks to reinforce and extend that project.¹⁶

According to Bensa's analysis of *Kanaké, Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie* (the authorship of which Bensa tends to attribute to Tjibaou alone), Kanaké represents the '*individualisation synthétique des droits et vertus du peuple kanak*'.¹⁷ Indeed, Bensa maintains that Tjibaou elaborates a 'national' '*mythe identitaire*', uniting all Kanak people and affirming their collective socio-political legitimacy and rights in relation to other groups in New Caledonia. This is accomplished through the extraction of the Kanaké figure from its original, regional context in the 'traditional' *Paicî* 'myth' and the transposition of this figure and its function within the 'traditional' 'myth' into a 'national', pan-Kanak register concerning New Caledonia as a whole.¹⁸ Thus, Bensa contends that Tjibaou '*reprend l'argument*' (or rather, the discursive modality, function and strategy) common to all 'traditional' Kanak foundational 'myths':

pour le compte du peuple mélanésien tout entier : aux temps primordiaux les Kanak habitaient déjà l'archipel et étaient coutumièrement organisés pour accueillir des groupes extérieurs à leur pays. L'ancienneté des fondateurs et l'ouverture des premiers occupants vers les étrangers : deux thèmes n'ayant originellement qu'une signification locale mais

¹⁴ Patrice Godin identifies the 'myth' of '*Téâ Kānaké*' as a '*récit des origines de la société pour une fraction importante des clans de l'aire linguistique paicî-cèmuhi*': Godin (1999: 342).

¹⁵ Bensa contends that, as with all Kanak 'myths' of this type (which are elaborated in relation to 'micro-local' socio-political contexts and perform specific socio-political functions in those 'micro-local' contexts), '[d]ans leur contexte social spécifique, ces « mythes » recourent à des images codées pour légitimer l'enracinement immémorial des lignages les plus anciens.' Indeed, Bensa maintains that a common rhetoric is mobilised in all 'traditional' Kanak '*récits mythiques*' of this kind, in which the '*premiers occupants*' of a particular place '*sont assimilés au tout premier homme apparu avec la formation même de la terre insulaire.*' Bensa (1995a: 295-297). See also Tjibaou (1975); Tjibaou and Missotte (1978: 42-54).

¹⁶ Tjibaou and Missotte (1978).

¹⁷ Bensa (1995a: 295).

¹⁸ Ibid.

*auxquels Tjibaou entend donner une portée politique beaucoup plus générale.*¹⁹

Bensa's analysis is confirmed by Tjibaou's particular construction of the figure of *Kanaké* as the Kanak 'archetype' in the preface to this book,²⁰ as well as by the role of *Kanaké* in *Mélanésie 2000's jeu scénique*.

The political message and implications of this new, 'national foundational myth' articulated in the three *tableaux* of the *jeu scénique* stems from the nature of the historical narrative constructed therein and from the (interrelated) nature of the *jeu scénique's* representation of Kanak singularity and unity. In the first *tableau*, Kanak people are represented as sharing a common culture and tradition. In the second *tableau*, they are identified as sharing a common history of colonial domination and exploitation, as well as a history of resistance thereto. Kanak people are also represented in this *tableau* as facing the same contemporary situation, characterised as one of extreme social crisis and marginalisation, as a direct result of colonisation. In the third *tableau*, Kanak people are represented as sharing a common perspective and agency in relation to the future, a future which is also represented in collective terms. The *jeu scénique* as a whole can be seen to represent Kanak people as a group as having a particular (social, cultural and political) legitimacy, stemming from their status as the country's first inhabitants, and consequently as having a rightful claim to a particular position in relation to the other, non-indigenous groups now living in New Caledonia.

Missotte maintains that the overall structure of the *jeu scénique* was based on '*le schéma : vie, mort, résurrection.*'²¹ This clearly resonates with certain aspects of Christian belief and theology. It can also be seen to resonate with certain Kanak understandings of the world. For example, as noted by Godin, in some versions of the 'myth' of '*Téâ Kānaké*' itself: '*Téâ Kānaké connaît [...] la mort et une forme de résurrection [...]. La mort dans le monde kanak n'est jamais une fin, mais la douloureuse promesse d'une renaissance.*'²² It might also be noted that in the initial text

¹⁹ Ibid., 297. The two elements of the message identified in and significance attributed to Tjibaou's appropriation of the 'myth' and figure of *Kanaké* by Bensa are similarly affirmed by Godin: Godin (1999: 343).

²⁰ See Tjibaou (1978).

²¹ Missotte (1995b: 89).

²² Godin (1999: 344).

written by Tjibaou in 1974 outlining the reasons for and objectives of *Mélanésie 2000* he referred to '*la reconnaissance (RE-NAÎTRE-AVEC) réciproque des deux cultures dans ce qu'elles ont de spécifique*', as the necessary precondition for a harmonious future shared by all of the country's inhabitants and the emergence of '*une culture nouvelle calédonienne*'.²³ Tjibaou's emphasis on the meaning of the different components of the word '*reconnaissance*' as '*re-naître-avec*' clearly resonates with the characterisation of the *jeu scénique*'s last *tableau* as representing a collective 'resurrection' or 'rebirth'.

Thus, while the present-day reality of Kanak people is characterised in the *jeu scénique* as a '*marche aveugle dans la nuit*',²⁴ in the last *tableau* a radical transformation of New Caledonian society is realised through the restitution of the place of Kanak people collectively as the country's original, indigenous inhabitants and the institution of a new (metaphorical) '*partage des ignames*' between the Kanak community and '*les hommes blancs*'.²⁵ Constructed as the way forward to a peaceful, 'fraternal' future shared by all of the '*peuples*' now living in the country, this socio-political transformation and reconciliation is represented in the last *tableau* as being rendered possible by the recollection and transcendence of the past.²⁶ The figure of *Kanaké* both embodies and expresses the (Kanak, pre-colonial and colonial) past and its (post-colonial) dialectical transcendence.

In the last scene of the *jeu scénique*, the nature of the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised is radically transformed through its reformulation on Kanak terms, via its translation into a Kanak 'customary' framework.²⁷ Following the 'customary' mode

²³ Tjibaou in Missotte (1995b: 67).

²⁴ Dobbelaere and Tjibaou (1975: 31).

²⁵ Ibid., 32.

²⁶ Ibid., 31-32.

²⁷ The means through which a dialogue and a new, harmonious relationship transcending a colonial dynamic is achieved between the Kanak people and '*les hommes blancs*' in the last *tableau* is the adoption of Kanak values and 'tradition' by '*les hommes blancs*' in recognising and interacting with the Kanak people in accordance with the Kanak 'customary' mode of *accueil*. This logic is also apparent in the following statement made by Tjibaou in an interview with LC published soon after *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival in September 1975. Tjibaou maintains: '[c]e festival permet au groupe Mélanésien de dire sa présence aujourd'hui en Nouvelle-Calédonie. Mais ce n'est pas une rencontre fermée aux autres groupes du Territoire. Si on tend à rechercher une unité c'est plutôt dans le sens d'une recherche interne pour nous et cela est même possible dans la perspective de rencontrer les autres. Le groupe Mélanésien doit retrouver sa fierté après s'être renié pour des valeurs nouvelles qui aujourd'hui le laisse sur sa faim en invitant les autres à partager ses propres valeurs.' 'Jean Marie TJIBAOU EXPLIQUE – L'ÊTRE et

of *accueil* (discussed in the Introduction), '*les hommes blancs*' request to be welcomed and received ('*non pas comme des maîtres qui s'imposent, mais comme des frères qu'on invite*')²⁸ by the Kanak people²⁹ as the country's (metaphorical) '*maîtres de la terre*', and the '*apports positifs de la civilisation européenne*' are reconceived as the customary offering accompanying this request.³⁰ In return, the Kanak people invites '*nos hôtes [...]* à cette cérémonie de la paix', and offers '*nos ignames à la communauté*' as an inclusive whole.³¹ These metaphorical '*ignames*', constructed here as belonging to or being part of Kanak people collectively, are identified as representing: Kanak culture and tradition; '*la beauté de notre île*' (that is, the land itself); and the wealth of the country's natural resources, such as its nickel reserves.³² In this manner, a radical shift in the predominant relations of material and symbolic power is brought about and the relative positions occupied by the Kanak people and '*les hommes blancs*' subsequent to colonisation are transformed,³³ a transformation which effectively represents the restitution to Kanak people collectively of their position, legitimacy and rights as the original inhabitants of the country, and consequently the restitution of Kanak sovereignty.³⁴

L'AVOIR différencie les deux cultures en présence : Kanak et Occidentale.', *Les Calédoniens*, no. 34, 25/09-01/10/1975, 2. This passage itself echoes the perspective articulated by Tjibaou a year earlier in the initial document outlining the reasons for and objectives of the festival project (discussed in Chapter One): Tjibaou in Missotte (1995b: 67). Missotte similarly confirms that: '*c'est [...] en visant à se considérer lui-même comme l'ensemble néo-calédonien, par lequel les autres devraient passer pour en faire partie qu'il [le groupe kanak] organise le festival*': Missotte (1985: 522-523).

²⁸ Dobbelaere and Tjibaou (1975: 31).

²⁹ Note that while there is one reference by the Kanak '*Maître des cérémonies*' to '*tous les autres peuples*', there are no direct references in the *jeu scénique* to 'the Kanak people' as such. However, Kanak people are clearly represented in the *jeu scénique* as a united and singular group, particularly in relation to their colonisers.

³⁰ Dobbelaere and Tjibaou (1975: 32).

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Note that when the colonisers first arrived, depicted at the beginning of the second *tableau*, implicit in the actions of the Kanak people is the attempted 'customary' welcome of the newcomers to their land – a mode and framework of socio-political interaction that was not, however, understood by the colonisers and was consequently left one-sided and so without meaning, value or consequence, having been ultimately unrealised. See *ibid.*, 29.

³⁴ The modality of this transformation and restitution is described concisely by Partrice Godin in the following terms: '[L]a revendication du « premier occupant » était pour Jean-Marie Tjibaou la condition même d'un véritable échange avec les autres communautés installées en Nouvelle-Calédonie, conformément au schéma traditionnel « revisité » qui veut que dans toute relation d'échange, il y ait toujours deux groupes, l'un dit « autochtone », l'autre « étranger ».' Godin (1999: 344).

It is from their refound position as the country's first occupants or '*maîtres de la terre*' that the Kanak people institute the new '*partage des ignames*' for the New Caledonian community as a whole and the necessary precondition for the possibility of a peaceful and 'fraternal' future shared by all people living in the country is met. As stated by Tjibaou and Dobbelaere in the Festival Program:

[i]l est temps que soit oublié le rapport conquérants – colonisés, il est temps que s'instaure une relation nouvelle, celle qui présidait au partage traditionnel des ignames, au *boenando* : chacun présente ses offrandes et l'avenir permet d'espérer une relation fraternelle harmonieuse et pacifique[.]³⁵

Thus, at the conclusion of the *jeu scénique*, this '*partage des ignames*' or '*échange fraternel*', modelled broadly on Kanak 'custom', is itself incorporated into the resumption of the original '*boenando*' ceremony.

The manner in which the colonisers and '*les hommes blancs*' are collectively represented in the *jeu scénique* itself undergoes a radical transformation in the last *tableau*. All of the roles in the *jeu scénique*, including those of '*les hommes blancs*', were played by Kanak individuals when it was performed on the two final evenings of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival.³⁶ In the second *tableau*, two different means were used to represent the agents of the colonisation of the country and its indigenous people. Firstly, three large marionettes were used to represent the figures of '*le capitaine*', '*le marchand*' and '*le missionnaire*'. These three figures can be seen to correspond to the broad structures imposed through colonisation – that is, the French State and French sovereignty and rule; Capitalism; and Western religion. The other agents of colonisation were represented as a group of thirty soldiers who, throughout the second *tableau*, never directly speak but who effectively act so as to realise the will of the three marionettes. The identical costumes of these colonial soldiers included a white mask.³⁷ According to Missotte's description:

³⁵ Tjibaou and Dobbelaere, '*pourquoi un jeu scénique*', in Bonnabesse and Missotte (1975: 17).

³⁶ Missotte (1995b: 91); Brown (2008: 544).

³⁷ According to Brown's analysis, the fact that all roles in the *jeu scénique* were played by Kanak people '*reflète la logique culturelle et politique de l'événement où les Kanak retrouvent leur culture et leur espace dans 'la ville des Blancs', Nouméa, selon une mise en scène symbolique du renversement des rapports de force et des rôles.*' Footnote omitted, Brown (2008: 544). Another layer of symbolism might also be identified in this particular reversal of roles, given the white masks worn by these Kanak actors. Beyond the functional character of this costume, it might also be seen to invoke the thinking of Fanon,

[L]eur regard vide dans le masque blanc et leur jeu, syncopé comme celui de poupées mécaniques, accentue le contraste entre la dépersonnalisation de ces personnages et l'exubérante vitalité de la scène précédente.³⁸

This was also echoed and reinforced through the use of the three large marionettes.

The festival's organisers repeated on numerous occasions in their communications with the public that '*il ne faut pas chercher d'allusion historique précise*' in the '*évocation*' of the European arrival in the *jeu scénique*, depicted from a Kanak perspective, '*qui tient du cauchemard*.'³⁹ Missotte has also highlighted the function of these marionettes (a function which can similarly be attributed to the role and depiction of the colonial soldiers) as a means of avoiding the possible identification of or allusion to any specific historical individuals in the *jeu scénique*'s representation of colonisation.⁴⁰

In the last *tableau* of the *jeu scénique* the three marionettes are absent and '*les hommes blancs*' (as they are now called, rather than '*soldats*') remove their masks⁴¹ and speak on their own behalf after having been directly addressed by *Kanaké* on behalf of the Kanak people.⁴² Tjibaou and Dobbelaere highlight this transformation in their text

author of *Peau noire, masques blancs*, who outlined the negative psychological impacts of colonisation on the colonised and whose analysis was influential on Tjibaou's thinking in relation to the contemporary situation of his own people and his conceptualisation of *Mélanésie 2000* as a means of changing it (as discussed in Chapter One). However, in this instance, the Kanak wearing of white masks is not a sign of their continuing psychological alienation and inferiority complex brought about by colonisation, but rather part of their public affirmation and *revendication* of their own positive, 'post-colonial' Kanak identity, dignity and agency. Thus, Tjibaou himself stated in an interview in 1984 that *Mélanésie 2000* '*a été l'aboutissement d'une prise de conscience, le résultat d'une crise d'identité*',³⁷ and was conceived by '*les Kanaks [...] comme la revendication d'une reconnaissance, le refus à la fois du masque blanc et de la subordination*.' Tjibaou (1996: 152).

³⁸ Missotte (1995b: 91).

³⁹ 'Le jeu scénique : Vers une évolution culturelle pacifique', *Mélanésie : journal du festival*, no. 1, September 1975, 5, reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 83). See also 'UN SPECIALISTE DES GRANDES MISES EN SCENE POUR « MELANESIA 2000 »', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 17/05/1975, 8; Tjibaou and Dobbelaere, '*pourquoi un jeu scénique*', in Bonnabesse and Missotte (1975: 17).

⁴⁰ Missotte (1995b: 91). Similarly, it is the figure of *Kanaké* (drawn from a particular Kanak 'foundational myth' and effectively representing and symbolising Kanak people as a whole in the *jeu scénique*) who revolts against colonisation, rather than any of the actual historical figures associated with the major Kanak revolts, such as Ataï. See in this connection *ibid.*, 91, footnote 122.

⁴¹ Although their masks were removed, the faces of these Kanak actors playing '*les hommes blancs*' were presumably covered in white makeup. If this was not the case the symbolism of this last *tableau* could potentially be interpreted in a different manner.

⁴² Dobbelaere and Tjibaou (1975: 31).

‘explaining’ the *jeu scénique* in the Festival Program, stating: ‘[l]es masques sont arrachés, ce ne sont plus des mannequins qui parlent mais des hommes authentiques.’⁴³

Consequently, it is only through entering into a real, meaningful and respectful dialogue with the Kanak people on Kanak terms that ‘les hommes blancs’ become autonomous, human agents in the *jeu scénique*’s last *tableau*.⁴⁴

⁴³ Tjibaou and Dobbelaere, ‘pourquoi un jeu scénique’, in Bonnabesse and Missotte (1975: 17).

⁴⁴ Missotte maintains that *Mélanésie 2000* prefigured the Kanak political recognition at the Nainville-les-Roches round-table discussions in 1983 of New Caledonia’s so called ‘*victimes de l’histoire*’ and their right to vote in any future referendum on the country’s independence, subject to their initial recognition (and, indeed, that of the French State) of the particular political legitimacy and rights of the Kanak people as the country’s indigenous people, including their right to sovereignty and independence. However, the discourse arising from Nainville-les-Roches recognising New Caledonia’s non-Kanak ‘*victimes de l’histoire*’ can be distinguished from that of *Mélanésie 2000*’s organisers in that the *jeu scénique* made no reference to the history (and the injustices and hardships) of non-Kanak settlement (including, for instance, through the establishment of a penal colony and the use of indentured labourers). Moreover, the idea of the ‘*victimes de l’histoire*’ can be seen to a certain extent to deflect responsibility and agency in relation to colonisation and its negative impacts on the Kanak people away from the country’s non-Kanak settlers and their descendants living in New Caledonia to the colonial State and its impersonal systems and structures controlled from Metropolitan France. While the impersonal colonial systems are foregrounded in the representation of colonisation enacted in the second *tableau* of the *jeu scénique*, the re-humanised ‘*hommes blancs*’ with whom the Kanak people institute a new dialogue and exchange in the third *tableau* are nevertheless still expressly identified as having been responsible for colonisation and its negative impacts on the country’s indigenous, colonised people. See Dobbelaere and Tjibaou (1975); Missotte (1995b: 69, footnote 52); Mokaddem (2005a: 136); and the text of the Nainville-les-Roches agreement, reproduced in Association pour la fondation d’un institut Kanak d’histoire moderne (1984: 107) and in Gabriel and Kermel (1985: 130).

ANNEX 4

Beyond *Mélanésie 2000*: 1976 to 1988

As indicated in Chapter One, neither of the two possible avenues envisaged for the concrete prolongation of the *Mélanésie 2000* project – associated respectively with the potential future use of the main-festival site and with the possibility of organising one or more future festivals – were successfully pursued subsequent to the 1975 event. In terms of the main-festival site, an article entitled ‘*L’après-festival*’ published in the second edition of *Mélanésie 2000*’s official newspaper identifies the ‘*responsables*’ of *Mélanésie 2000* as hoping:

*d’y voir se créer un centre artisanal permanent, avec par exemple des sculpteurs et des artisans installés aux abords des cases. Le centre pourrait aussi devenir un lieu de promenade pour tous, un lieu de rencontre pour les Mélanésien et pourquoi pas y intégrer le foyer culturel mélanésien dont on a peine à trouver l’emplacement.*¹

It is worth noting that, according to this article, if the main-festival site were to become such a Kanak socio-cultural centre it could also ‘*avoir l’originalité d’être ouvert à tous ou à toutes manifestations culturelles.*’² This point was also highlighted subsequently by Missotte, who maintains that Tjibaou planned for the country’s other ethnic groups to construct their own ‘cases’ on the site, alongside the ‘traditional’ Kanak cases.³

‘*L’après-festival*’ article also affirms that the future development of the main-festival site could be realised:

dans la perspective d’un site tribal qui pourrait satisfaire à différentes aspirations. En y incluant une véritable animation coutumière l’environnement pourrait astucieusement être aménagé afin de compléter les ambitions du projet. Fêtes coutumières, danses et chants ne se prêtent guère au cadre urbain. Faire du site un centre d’animation permanent,

¹ ‘*L’après-festival*’, *Melanesia : journal du festival*, no. 2, September 1975, 3, reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 89).

² Ibid.

³ Missotte (1985: 528).

*laisserait la possibilité de vivre au milieu des contraintes qui l'entourent, certains aspects de la vie mélanésienne.*⁴

From the perspective of the festival's organisers, this project to allow for the adaptation of the urban environment and the organisation of the city (identified as the place in which the 'constraints' of 'modernity' are most keenly felt by and severely imposed on Kanak people) in reference to the Kanak 'way of life' (understood as encompassing Kanak 'tradition', 'custom', 'culture' and, indeed, 'identity'), can be seen to have represented both a means of transcending the fatality of the binary opposition of 'modernity' and 'tradition', as well as an important element of the process of Kanak and New Caledonian decolonisation. This perspective and project would be echoed by Tjibaou on many subsequent occasions, including notably in connection with the theme chosen for the fourth Festival of Pacific Arts, scheduled to have been hosted by New Caledonia in 1984 (discussed below).⁵ The same perspective was also apparent in some of the initial conceptions, developed in the 1980s and 1990s, of the project to construct a Kanak cultural centre in Noumea, although as the project to construct the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou* itself evolved in the 1990s these initial conceptions were gradually

⁴ 'L'après-festival', *Melanesia : journal du festival*, no. 2, September 1975, 3, reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 89). Note also that in a very early article in relation to the *Mélanésie 2000* project, published in December 1974, LFA had affirmed: 'le souci pour les organisateurs du festival d'art mélanésien d'arriver à officialiser une véritable Maison de la Culture, organisme à capitalisation de responsabilités.' 'MELANESIA 2000 – LA FRANCE ACCORDE 8.000.000 CFP pour la renaissance de la culture mélanésienne', *La France Australe*, 17/12/1974, 5. However, this specific objective attributed to *Mélanésie 2000*'s organisers was not mentioned in the previous or subsequent coverage of the festival published by LFA or any of the other newspapers studied. On the other hand, the question of the future use of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main-festival site was raised broadly in the coverage of the event published by both daily newspapers and LJC subsequent to its conclusion in September. See 'Que deviendra Mélanésie 2000', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/09/1975, 15; 'M. JEAN-MARIE TJIBAOU, PRESIDENT DU COMITE ORGANISATEUR « MELANESIA 2000 A DEPASSÉ TOUTES NOS ESPÉRANCES »', *La France Australe*, 09/09/1975, 5; 'L'avocat du diable à cœur ouvert avec : Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 5. However, this question was largely unexplored and was ultimately left open by these newspapers, given that it was yet to be determined by Municipality of Noumea (as the legal owner of the site). LNC expressly advocates the continued use of the site and the infrastructure constructed thereon into the future, affirming: '[i]l serait tout de même dommage que tout cela ne soit que feu de paille et que toutes ces installations soient vouées à l'abandon et au pourrissement.' 'Que deviendra Mélanésie 2000', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/09/1975, 15.

⁵ The theme initially proposed for the 1984 Festival was 'Pacific My New Home' (in English). However, this theme was modified following consultation with the Council of Pacific Arts at a meeting in 1982. The official report from that meeting recorded: '[s]ome delegates expressed reservations on the suggested subtitle and after discussion it was agreed that the sub-title for the Fourth Festival of Pacific Arts be "Our pacific Home".' However, despite this change, the idea behind the selected theme remained the same. See South Pacific Commission (1982). See also Tjibaou (1996: 154-160, 195-199).

superseded by a different one, which addressed a different set of preoccupations and objectives (as discussed in Chapter Two).⁶

None of the projects for the future use of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main-festival site proposed at the time of the festival's conclusion were ultimately brought to fruition. While some minimal subsequent use was made of the site and its infrastructure, including the 'traditional' *cases*, the site was not maintained and, according to Missotte, after a period of time '[T]es Mélanésien(ne)s ne se sentaient plus chez eux.'⁷ Indeed, Missotte contends that an unexpressed but significant resistance to the permanent Kanak installation on or control over this site in such close proximity to Noumea existed within the local 'European'-dominated political and administrative authorities.⁸ Missotte maintains that, in consequence, the site of the main festival '*s'est détérioré et a été rendu à la brousse, par la volonté de son propriétaire, la municipalité de Nouméa.*'⁹

Furthermore, in an increasingly tense social and political context, the 'traditional' Kanak *cases* constructed on *Mélanésie 2000*'s main-festival site appear to have been deliberately successively set alight from October 1980.¹⁰ In light of the emergence during this period of the Kanak *revendication* of 'traditional' lands (often associated with the physical occupation of the land in question and the construction thereon of a symbolic *case*) and the links between this *revendication* (and associated strategies) and the increasing political mobilisation of the Kanak population in favour of 'Kanak Socialist Independence',¹¹ the apparently systematic destruction of the 'traditional' *cases* constructed on Noumea's outskirts for *Mélanésie 2000* – a Kanak cultural festival organised by Tjibaou, who had now become the pro-independence movement's most prominent political leader – might itself be understood as a highly charged political act. As such, it could be seen to illustrate the 'evolution' of the local population's understanding of the political signification and implications of the construction of Kanak *cases*, of a Kanak presence in specific geographical and socio-political

⁶ See Bensa (1992); Bensa (2000: 111-118).

⁷ Missotte (1985: 529).

⁸ Ibid., 529-530.

⁹ Ibid., 529.

¹⁰ Association pour la fondation d'un institut Kanak d'histoire moderne (1984: 99).

¹¹ See the discussion in Annex 1.

landscapes (particularly including that constituted by the capital city), and of the Kanak cultural 'revival' and *revendication* embodied by initiatives such as *Mélanésie 2000* itself.

The impact of New Caledonia's changing socio-political context on the politics of Kanak culture and identity is also apparent in the fate of the second primary aspect of the concrete prolongation of *Mélanésie 2000* planned by its organisers – the realisation of one or more subsequent festivals, building on the dynamic launched through *Mélanésie 2000*. The intention to organise a subsequent festival of this nature was clearly signalled by Tjibaou in the initial 1974 document explaining the reasons for and objectives of *Mélanésie 2000*. Tjibaou affirmed in this text that: '[a]u-delà du festival mélanésien, la perspective qui se profile à l'horizon est celle d'une grande manifestation d'expression culturelle calédonienne pour 1980.'¹² This second festival, to be titled '*Calédonia 2000*', was to involve the participation of all of the country's ethno-cultural communities. According to Tjibaou in this initial text, from this later festival '*pourra naître une culture nouvelle calédonienne*.'¹³

However, it is important to stress that, as highlighted subsequently by Fote Trolue, the *Calédonia 2000* project:

*n'était pas, comme certains le pensent, pour que les calédoniens présentent leur culture dans un souci d'équilibre après Mélanésie 2000. Non, Calédonia 2000, ce sont les Kanak reconnus qui accueillent les autres cultures. Faut-il toujours le rappeler : les Kanak étaient déjà là quand les autres sont arrivés.*¹⁴

This perspective is (indirectly) confirmed both by Tjibaou's initial 1974 text and by *Mélanésie 2000*'s *jeu scénique*, discussed in Chapter One and Annex 3. Missotte

¹² Tjibaou in Missotte (1995b: 67). The project of organising such a festival was also signalled in *Mélanésie 2000*'s main-festival newspaper, according to which: '*l'extension d'une telle rencontre peut s'envisager avec la participation des autres ethnies du Territoire dans quelques années et peut être prendre la succession des arts du pacifique qui va se dérouler l'an prochain en Nouvelle-Zélande.*' 'L'après-festival', *Mélanésie : journal du festival*, no. 2, September 1975, 3, reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 89). Reference here is to the second Festival of Pacific Arts (then known as the South Pacific Festival of Arts), held in New Zealand in 1976.

¹³ Tjibaou in Missotte (1995b: 67).

¹⁴ Trolue and Caihe (1995: 163). Note that, according to Missotte's 1985 account, Trolue was among the group of individuals who worked in the late 1970s and early 1980s on *Calédonia 2000*'s organisation, despite his having been one of the Kanak students in Metropolitan France opposed to *Mélanésie 2000* in 1975: Missotte (1985: 531).

similarly emphasises this construction and understanding of the *Calédonia 2000* project. However, Missotte indicates that:

[l]'action culturelle, promue par l'administration et les milieux européens-calédoniens firent exactement le contraire en remplaçant ostensiblement l'ethnie mélanésienne sur le même pied que les autres.¹⁵

The possibility of a series of future festivals, including both events of a 'mélanésien' character (similar to *Mélanésie 2000*) and events of a broader, inclusive character, incorporating all of the country's ethno-cultural communities (in line with the *Calédonia 2000* concept), is signalled in the coverage of *Mélanésie 2000* published by the two daily newspapers and LJC, particularly subsequent to the conclusion of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival.¹⁶ These newspapers all represent these planned future festivals in a positive light. However, there is no clear indication of *Calédonia 2000*'s intended nature and significance as being designed to realise, at least to some degree, the Kanak *accueil* of New Caledonia's more recent arrivals, as projected in the last *tableau* of *Mélanésie 2000*'s *jeu scénique*.¹⁷

Aspects of the dynamic of *Mélanésie 2000* appear in the immediate future to have been transferred to the organisation of the New Caledonian (Kanak) delegation to the second Festival of Pacific Arts (then known as the South Pacific Festival of Arts), held in March 1976 in Rotorua, New Zealand. According to Waddell, Tjibaou accompanied the New Caledonian delegation, which notably performed the first *tableau* of *Mélanésie 2000*'s *jeu scénique* ('*Le Boenando*').¹⁸ Missotte maintains that the organisation of the Kanak delegation was, as in the case of *Mélanésie 2000* before it, inscribed in a '*démarche coutumière*'.¹⁹

¹⁵ Missotte (1995b: 97); and see Missotte (1985: 484, 532). This is corroborated, at least in part, by Guiart's '*témoignage*': Guiart (1996: 98).

¹⁶ See particularly 'Ce n'est qu'un au revoir', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/09/1975, 5; 'Que deviendra Mélanésie 2000', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/09/1975, 15; 'M. JEAN-MARIE TJIBAOU, PRESIDENT DU COMITE ORGANISATEUR « MELANESIA 2000 A DEPASSÉ TOUTES NOS ESPÉRANCES »', *La France Australe*, 09/09/1975, 5; 'L'avocat du diable à cœur ouvert avec : Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Le Journal Calédonien*, no. 83, 17-23/09/1975, 5.

¹⁷ This is despite the inclusion in that coverage of several direct quotations from Tjibaou in relation to this subject.

¹⁸ Waddell (2008: 95). See also Violette (1989: 27).

¹⁹ Missotte (1985: 459). This can be contrasted to the organisation of New Caledonia's delegation to the first South Pacific Festival of Arts, held in 1972 in Suva, Fiji. Jacques Iékawé, who was involved in the organisation of the New Caledonian delegation to Suva and in the organisation of *Mélanésie 2000*, is

However, despite this limited continuation of the *Mélanésie 2000* dynamic there were no festivals held in subsequent years in New Caledonia of the same type and inspiration as either *Mélanésie 2000* or *Calédonia 2000*. According to Joseph Caihe's subsequent 'témoignage': '[i]l y avait une volonté délibérée de bloquer Calédonia 2000.'²⁰ Missotte maintains that, despite certain genuine efforts, the organisation of a subsequent festival was hindered by a number of factors, including the increasing salience of political issues and tensions with the progressive crystallisation of the Kanak independence movement and its emergence as a strong political and social force.²¹ It was during this period that Jean-Marie Tjibaou engaged directly in the political arena, being elected Mayor of Hienghène in March 1977 and Vice-President of the *Union Calédonienne*, which had for many years been the dominant local political party, at its May 1977 Congress. The same Congress also saw the party's first official adoption of a pro-independence stance, prompting the departure of the majority of its remaining 'European' members.²² The pro-Kanak independence movement subsequently continued to gain magnitude and momentum, and in 1979 the UC, Palika, the UPM, FULK and the PSC united in the *Front Indépendantiste* coalition.

Missotte also contends that the *Calédonia 2000* project languished during this period by reason of the local 'European' appropriation and 'occidentalisation' of the initiative and its organisation, combined with the absence of any clear, coherent project arising from the expanded, multi-ethnic group that had been designated to take up from where

cited in an article published in *Mélanésie 2000*'s official festival newspaper as stating: 'il n'y a pas de point commun ni de point de liaison entre le festival des Arts Mélanésiens auquel nous avons participé à Suva et Mélanésie 2000'. As well as affirming that the 'idée de fond' of the two festivals and their ultimate objectives were very different, Iékwé maintains in this connection that the New Caledonian delegation to the first South Pacific Festival of Arts had been organised very rapidly, 'et je dirai même de façon un peu sommaire. A l'époque nous avons contacté seulement quelques régions, obligés par le temps et les circonstances de nous limiter pour former une délégation globale du Territoire. Nous avons opéré par choix discrétionnaires mettant parfois des groupes en concurrence.' Jacques Iékwé, 'Une recherche interne pour conserver un acquis de référence', *Melanesia: journal du festival*, no. 3, September 1975, 4, reproduced in Missotte (1985: Annex 5 for Chapter 5, 98). According to Missotte, the limited success of the resulting Kanak participation in the 1972 festival was itself one of the motivating factors and the points of reference in relation to which the *Mouvement féminin pour un souriant village mélanésien* and *Mélanésie 2000*'s Organising Committee first formulated and articulated the objectives and 'content' of the *Mélanésie 2000* festival project. Missotte (1985: 429, footnote 15); Missotte (1995b: 69, footnote 55).

²⁰ Trolue and Caihe (1995: 162).

²¹ Missotte (1985: 526-530); Missotte (1995b: 96-97).

²² Also recall that the RPC was created by Jacques Lafleur and others in 1977 on an anti-Kanak independence platform. It became the RPCR in 1978.

Mélanésie 2000's Organising Committee had left off.²³ According to Missotte, the primary focus of the local 'European' individuals and groups involved was the construction of various museums in relation to different aspects of the colonial history of the country, particularly relating to its non-Kanak settlement, rather than the realisation of *Calédonia 2000*.²⁴ Nevertheless, on Missotte's account, various political changes and the work of certain individuals in the late 1970s and early 1980s spurred new efforts in relation to the organisation of *Calédonia 2000*.²⁵ To this end, a group of individuals who had been central to the organisation of *Mélanésie 2000* (including Tjibaou, Iékawé and Missotte) was assembled and '*la dynamique était relancée*.'²⁶

The first step taken by this group was to organise New Caledonia's delegation to the third South Pacific Festival of Arts, held in mid-1980 in Port-Moresby, Papua New Guinea.²⁷ Missotte notes that this delegation, '*forte de 100 personnes[,] présenta deux sortes de spectacles de chants et danses et un jeu scénique, et l'artisanat traditionnel*'.²⁸ The coverage of this event published by LNC (which was by this time the only established, local mass-distribution daily newspaper, LFA having ceased publication in 1979) indicates that the growing salience of the political division around the question of Kanak independence had a direct impact on the perceived significance of the country's (Kanak) participation in this festival.²⁹ Indeed, this coverage suggests the increasing

²³ Missotte (1985: 526-530); Missotte (1995b: 96-97).

²⁴ Missotte (1985: 526-527); Missotte (1995b: 97).

²⁵ Missotte (1985: 530-531); Missotte (1995b: 97).

²⁶ Missotte (1995b: 97).

²⁷ Missotte (1985: 531); Missotte (1995b: 97).

²⁸ Missotte (1985: 531). It appears that Georges Dobbelaere and Pierre Bernard were again involved in the creation of this *jeu scénique*: see 'LE SPECTACLE QUI NOUS ATTEND AU FESTIVAL', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04-05/08/1984, 10. However, the precise nature and content of this *jeu scénique* is not indicated in the sources I consulted.

²⁹ For example, one article published by LNC on the third South Pacific Festival of Arts focuses on the attendance at the festival's opening ceremony of the Vice-President of New Caledonia's *Conseil de gouvernement* at the time, the now RPCR Kanak politician, Dick Ukeiwé, and the '*nombreux contacts politiques*' he is reported to have had during his stay in Port-Moresby. Ukeiwé, whose perspective is effectively shared and supported by LNC itself, is quoted as affirming that: '*j'ai eu tous ces contacts bien que MM. Tjibaou et Machoro aient déclaré aux autorités papoues avant mon arrivée que je ne représentais pas le peuple calédonien*.' Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Eloi Machoro were both prominent leaders of the *Union Calédonienne* and the *Front Indépendantiste* by this time. LNC goes on to report: '*[t]outes les déclarations de MM. Tjibaou et Machoro ont été reproduites à la N.B.C. et dans les journaux, a précisé M. Ukeiwé, mais les Calédoniens pourront juger de l'accueil qui a été réservé au vice-président puisque FR₃ Nouméa était présent et qu'ils doivent très prochainement voir ces réceptions en image*.' 'M. UKEIWE EST RENTRE DE PORT MORESBY – outre le Festival, il a eu de nombreux contacts politiques', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 07/07/1980, 6.

perception and use of such events (and, indeed, of regional organisations and the press in the Pacific region) as fora for the expression, legitimation and recognition of the different political positions, *revendications* and groups taking shape in New Caledonia at the time.³⁰ In contrast, LNC did not treat the Kanak participation in the first and second editions of the South Pacific Festival of Arts as political in nature or significance, or as being conceived as such by the organisers and participants of the local delegation or by the local political authorities.

During the third South Pacific Festival of Arts, New Caledonia was itself designated as the host of the festival's fourth edition, scheduled for 1984. According to Missotte, it was consequently decided by those implicated in the *Calédonia 2000* project that this 1984 regional event would replace *Calédonia 2000*, '[c]e qui revenait à l'annuler mais non à supprimer les aspirations qui en avait fait naître l'idée.'³¹

In 1981 François Mitterrand led the Socialist Party to power in France. Mitterrand's candidacy for President had been supported locally by the UC (which had become the dominant constituent of the pro-independence movement), largely by reason of the seemingly favourable position in relation to Kanak independence expressed by the Socialist Party in the lead up to the elections.³² The apparent progressive withdrawal of that party from this position once in power produced increasing disillusionment among members of the FI.³³ The UC nevertheless proceeded to fix the date for the country's accession to 'Kanak Socialist Independence' as 24 September 1982³⁴ – the anniversary of the '*prise de possession*' of New Caledonia by France in 1853 – with the intention of inverting the original symbolic significance of that date, which had been officially treated by the UC as a day of Kanak '*deuil*' since 1979.

Working within this broader perspective, the UC planned to mark the 24 September anniversary in 1981 by a grass-roots mobilisation involving protests and the occupation

³⁰ See, for example, *ibid.*

³¹ Missotte (1995b: 97). See also Missotte (1985: 531).

³² See Gabriel and Kermel (1985: 111-119).

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ 'OBJECTIF : 24 SEPTEMBRE 82 – LA STRATEGIE INDEPENDANTISTE – Elle passe par une occupation des terres', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/09/1981, 29.

of lands claimed by specific Kanak groups.³⁵ However, the pro-independence mobilisation which actually took place on the 24 September 1981 was of a different character as a result of the assassination of the UC's Secretary-General, Pierre Declercq, on the 19 September. Declercq was buried at La Conception on the 24 September while protest rallies took place in Noumea and throughout the country. A significant number of road-blocks were erected on the *Grande Terre* and a highly tense social atmosphere reigned.

In June 1982, a shift in the political alliances of the local pro-autonomy (and anti-independence) party, the *Fédération pour une nouvelle société calédonienne*, produced a pro-independence majority in the New Caledonian executive body (the *Conseil de gouvernement*) for the first time, which was led by Jean-Marie Tjibaou as the *Conseil's* Vice-President.³⁶ The date fixed by the FI for Kanak Socialist Independence was pushed back to 24 September 1984.

To mark the 24 September anniversary in 1982, the FI organised a culturo-political day in the *Place des Cocotiers*, which it referred to as a '*fête de la culture mélanésienne*' and a '*fête de la culture océanienne*'. The conception and articulation of this event and its coverage in the local press provide a useful point of comparison with *Mélanésie 2000*, illustrating the impact of the changing social and political context on the politics of Kanak culture and identity mobilised in and in relation to such 'cultural' events. The purpose and significance of the 24 September 1982 event was framed in *L'Avenir Calédonien* (the official publication of the UC) in the following terms:

[t]ant que nous ne serons pas indépendants, ce jour sera toujours un jour de deuil et nous le commémorerons cette année d'une façon particulière par une manifestation culturelle afin de montrer : notre présence dans ce pays et notre détermination à la faire respecter ; notre culture et notre identité kanake ; notre appartenance au monde océanien qui se traduit

³⁵ 'OBJECTIF : 24 SEPTEMBRE 82 – LA STRATEGIE INDEPENDANTISTE – Elle passe par une occupation des terres', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/09/1981, 29. As affirmed by Tjibaou (and cited by LNC) in November 1981: '[n]ous mettons l'urgence sur TOP 82 ; la revendication foncière n'est pas la revendication de parcelles de terres, c'est la reconquête de la patrie kanake'. On the other hand, part of the UC's political program determined in November 1981 was that, after 1982, '*toutes les terres devront revenir aux clans d'origine*', with the possibility of a subsequent redistribution of land to other Kanak groups. 'L'objectif de l'Union Calédonienne : ou TOP 82, L'INDEPENDANCE DES REGIONS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 16/11/1981, 6.

³⁶ On this subject, see Barbançon (2008).

*par la solidarité du Forum du Pacifique ; le bilan de notre lutte pour la reconquête de notre pays.*³⁷

Eloi Machoro was cited by LNC just prior to the 24 September as affirming in relation to the event that:

*[p]our nous ce sera une autre façon que la façon dite « officielle » (qui correspond aux occasions et aux réunions politiques) d'exprimer nos convictions politiques ; ce sera une occasion particulière d'ouvrir les gens à la réalité de la politique que nous défendons.*³⁸

Thus, in contrast to *Mélanésie 2000*, no distinction was drawn between Kanak culture and Kanak, pro-independence politics by the organisers of this event, who were themselves directly engaged political actors from the primary coalition of pro-independence political parties.³⁹

In line with this approach, the program for the day included speeches by politicians representing the constituent elements of the FI, alongside performances of dance, music, and so on.⁴⁰ The address delivered by Roch Pidjot focused particularly on colonisation and the history of the Kanak people, in relation to which he stated:

*[n]ous avons une histoire, une très longue histoire. Nous n'avons pas attendu le capitaine Cook ni Monseigneur Douarre pour faire notre histoire. Ce ne sont pas eux qui nous ont fait rentrer dans l'histoire, mais ce sont eux qui sont rentrés dans notre histoire.*⁴¹

In his speech, a large section of which was reproduced by LNC,⁴² Pidjot represented colonisation in terms of Kanak 'accueil', constructing the Kanak people as the active subject of its own history. Pidjot consequently also affirmed the agency of the Kanak

³⁷ 'Le 24 septembre 1982', *L'Avenir Calédonien*, 15/09/1982, 2. This article is reproduced in: 'LA PLUME A NOS LECTEURS : JUSTIN GUILLEMARD ET LE 24 SEPTEMBRE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/09/1982, 6.

³⁸ 'LE 24 SEPTEMBRE SUR LA PLACE DES COCOTIERS : LE F.I. VEUT EN FAIRE UNE MANIFESTATION CULTURELLE OCEANIQUE – LA FETE COMMENCERA PAR UN OFFICE CONCELEBRE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 21/09/1982, 5.

³⁹ A list of the individuals involved from each party was published by LNC in: 'LA COMPOSITION DU COMITE ORGANISATEUR', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23-26/09/1982, 2.

⁴⁰ 'LE PROGRAMME DU 24 SEPTEMBRE DU FRONT INDEPENDANTISTE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/1982, 2.

⁴¹ 'L'HISTOIRE CALEDONNIENNE VUE PAR LE DEPUTE PIDJOT', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 28/09/1982, 7.

⁴² 'L'HISTOIRE CALEDONNIENNE VUE PAR LE DEPUTE PIDJOT', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 28/09/1982, 7.

people to determine its future and that of the country as a whole, including setting the conditions for the continued presence of its non-Kanak inhabitants.⁴³

While Pidjot spoke of the negation of Kanak history (and of the Kanak worldview, perspective and agency) in the colonial mindset, he nevertheless strongly affirmed their positive presence and continuation. Indeed, according to Pidjot the struggle against colonisation had itself produced the historical construction of the Kanak people as a unified subject and agent (which was otherwise united by its shared culture), oriented towards the same project for the future: Kanak Socialist Independence.⁴⁴ The perspective articulated by Pidjot in this public address bears many similarities to that expressed in the medium of public performance seven years earlier through *Mélanésie 2000*'s *jeu scénique*, although the former can be distinguished from the latter particularly by its explicit 'political' inscription in favour of decolonisation and Kanak independence.

LNC's coverage of Pidjot's address was published under the headline: '*L'HISTOIRE CALEDONIENNE VUE PAR LE DEPUTE PIDJOT*'.⁴⁵ The lead paragraph of this article framed Pidjot's speech as '*la vision mélanésienne de l'histoire calédonienne*'.⁴⁶ In this manner, the newspaper emphasised the particular, subjective and politically oriented nature of Pidjot's 'view' of local history, thereby implicitly calling into question its validity, legitimacy and 'truth' as 'history'.⁴⁷

⁴³ Pidjot stated: '[c]'est nous qui faisons notre histoire et il n'y a que nous qui puissions la faire. Nous avons accueilli les blancs dès 1774 et nous continuerons de les accueillir dans la mesure où ils nous reconnaissent à égalité. Il y a toujours eu place dans notre histoire pour le pardon. Mais il y a toujours eu place aussi pour notre dignité, notre identité, parce que c'est au cours de cette histoire que se sont forgés et développés nos coutumes, nos valeurs, nos modèles, c'est-à-dire notre culture': *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Pidjot states that: '*la théorie colonialiste, qui prétend que nous sommes rentrés dans l'Histoire en 1853, constitue en fait une volonté d'arrêter notre Histoire à 1853. Eh ! bien, cela ne nous a pas arrêtés. Cela n'a pas arrêté Ataï ni tous ceux qui depuis lors ont lutté contre la dépossession et pour notre libération nationale. Et c'est dans cette lutte ensemble en même temps que dans la richesse de nos diversités régionales que nous avons forgé l'unité de notre peuple et que nous avons précisé nos choix pour l'avenir*': *ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* Note that in his address, Pidjot himself highlights the existence of two competing versions of the country's colonial history, which are constructed by him as being connected to two competing 'worldviews' (although this precise term is not used by him). Pidjot contends that: '[c]ette journée du 24 septembre illustre tout à fait deux conceptions différentes de la vie et de l'histoire : les blancs nous indiquent qu'ils ont découvert la Calédonie en prenant possession de nous, quant à nous, nous avons découvert les blancs en les accueillant. Du temps et du sang ont coulé depuis, et des blancs militent aujourd'hui avec nous pour notre libération nationale.'

Moreover, Pidjot's 'view' of the country's history was not the only one to be given voice in LNC's coverage of the 24 September event. An article in the paper's following edition featured extensive quotations from Jacques Lafleur in which he addressed this topic.⁴⁸ Lafleur's position in relation to the FI event was articulated as accepting of '*le droit à la différence*' while ultimately affirming the primacy of (so-called) 'equal rights'.⁴⁹ His particular construction of history served to justify this affirmation of the 'equal rights' of all those living in the country (Kanak and non-Kanak) in the present, which can itself be identified as a means of undermining the position of the Kanak independence movement.

While Lafleur expressly acknowledged the '*injustices*' and '*erreurs*' committed, he relegated these to the '*passé lointain*'.⁵⁰ Indeed, Lafleur is quoted by LNC as characterising the position articulated by the FI during the 24 September event as being based on '*fantasmes historiques*'.⁵¹ Lafleur is cited in the following terms:

« [t]ant qu'il s'agit d'une manifestation symbolique pour dire nous sommes là, nous étions là avant, tant qu'il s'agit de participer à la vie de la capitale, je le comprends et je l'admets facilement ; il ne doit pas y avoir d'exclusion ». Face à cette réalité « qui peut être comprise », Jacques Lafleur a opposé « le rêve ». « Réclamer le Sud et revenir cent ans en arrière, en voulant tout simplement transformer ce rêve en réalité est proprement impossible ».⁵²

Constructing a strict division and a large distance between that past and the present, Lafleur's discourse (as cited by LNC) effectively worked to occlude the continuities

⁴⁸ 'JACQUES LAFLEUR : « IL EST IMPOSSIBLE DE TRANSFORMER LE REVE EN REALITE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/09/1982, 9.

⁴⁹ Ibid. The extreme right-wing, conservative and 'loyalist' local weekly publication, *Corail*, also mobilised the affirmation of democratic principles and 'equal rights' to support its opposition to the FI and this event in an editorial signed 'D'Aubigné' and entitled '*L'AUTRE DÉMONSTRATION*' published in early October 1982. However, unlike Lafleur, *Corail* makes no reference to the past, appearing to entirely occlude the country's colonial history and its possible implications for the present. Moreover, beyond merely condemning the FI's position as an impossible 'dream', as does Lafleur, *Corail* expressly foreshadows the possibility of future violence in relation to this *revendication* of Kanak Socialist Independence. A certain, implicit racism can also be identified in *Corail*'s discourse. See D'Aubigné, 'ÉDITORIAL : *L'AUTRE DÉMONSTRATION*', *Corail*, no. 132, 01/10/1982, 3.

⁵⁰ 'JACQUES LAFLEUR : « IL EST IMPOSSIBLE DE TRANSFORMER LE REVE EN REALITE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/09/1982, 9.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

between that past and the present and consequently to undermine any claims for particular rights in the present based on that past. This strategy is similar to that mobilised by LNC itself in its coverage of *Mélanésie 2000's jeu scénique*.

As indicated in the above citation, the FI's 1982 'cultural festival' was also inscribed in the Kanak movement to reclaim 'traditional' land rights and ownership. This *revendicatif* aspect of the event dominated its prior and subsequent coverage in LNC. Thus, in the lead-up to the event the link was repeatedly drawn (both in the newspaper's own commentary and through the publication of letters from its readers) between, on the one hand, the Kanak 'occupation' of the central square of the capital city and the potential construction of a '*case symbolique*' on that site as part of the FI-organised event⁵³ and, on the other, the *revendication* of the Noumea area by Kanak groups claiming 'customary' ownership thereof. Furthermore, all of these elements were linked in turn to the broader Kanak *revendication* of political independence.

The specific *revendication* by certain Kanak groups of lands including the Noumea area had become front page news earlier in September 1982, with one prominent headline proclaiming: '*INCROYABLE MAIS VRAI : NOUMÉA EST REVENDIQUÉ – DE DUMBÉA À PLUM, LES PRÉTENTIONS DES 7 CLANS NE SONT PAS SYMBOLIQUES*'.⁵⁴ Around this time the newspaper also published a number of letters purporting to disprove the 'customary' and 'historical' validity of these Kanak land claims.⁵⁵ The publication of these letters can be identified as a strategy mobilised by the

⁵³ The symbolic significance of the *Place des Cocotiers* and its Kanak occupation is discussed in Chapter Three and Annex 12 in relation to the *Mwā Kā* initiative.

⁵⁴ '*INCROYABLE MAIS VRAI : NOUMÉA EST REVENDIQUÉ – DE DUMBÉA À PLUM, LES PRÉTENTIONS DES 7 CLANS NE SONT PAS SYMBOLIQUES*', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 11-12/09/1982, 1.

⁵⁵ See, for instance, Mme Bouteille, 'LA PLUME A NOS LECTEURS : AU SUJET DE LA REVENDICATION DES CLANS DU SUD – Mme BOUTEILLE REpond A M. MUYATEA', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 01/10/1982, 37; Mme Bouteille, 'LA PLUME A NOS LECTEURS : MME BOUTEILLE PARLE A M. PIDJOT DU PEUPLE QUI A PRECEDE LES KANAKS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/10/1982, 9; Mme Bouteille, 'LA PLUME A NOS LECTEURS : DES RACINES HISTORIQUES AU DANGER COMMUNISTE – UN MEMOIRE DE MME BOUTEILLE ET SES CHEFS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 11/10/1982, 15. In these letters '*Mme Bouteille*', who claims to be a descendent of '*Grands Chefs de sang*', elaborates her own version of the history of the Kanak occupation of the Southern region of the *Grande Terre*, which she represents as being the 'true' history of the region, purportedly drawn from and corroborated by both the French National Archives and her 'customary' sources of knowledge and authority. Moreover, Bouteille also appears to adopt the thesis elaborated by Roger Ludeau (a *Conseiller Municipal* of La Foa at the time), according to which the Kanak people were preceded in New Caledonia by a 'more advanced', white 'race' of people. Mme Bouteille, 'LA PLUME A NOS LECTEURS : MME BOUTEILLE PARLE A M. PIDJOT DU PEUPLE

newspaper to discredit and undermine these claims. LNC's coverage of the FI event was framed by this broader context.⁵⁶

The newspaper's report on the event published after its conclusion underlined its *revendicative* nature in terms of both the specific claims of 'customary' ownership of Noumea and the broader Kanak claims and struggle for the country's political independence.⁵⁷ This first *revendicatif* aspect was particularly linked in the paper's coverage to the '*coutume d'accueil*' performed at the start of the day's activities. According to LNC, this ceremony represented for the event's FI organisers '*le sommet de la journée*.'⁵⁸ The paper reported that:

[c] 'est pour bien montrer cette notion de propriété coutumière du sol de la ville de Nouméa que la cérémonie s'est déroulée devant une petite case symbolique montée par les gens du Sud. C'est pour cela aussi que le comité organisateur du Front Indépendantiste a fait le geste coutumier aux représentants des clans se réclamant propriétaires avec l'ensemble des offrandes apportées par les délégations venues de l'extérieur. Ce

QUI A PRECEDE LES KANAKS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/10/1982, 9; Jeannine Bouteille, 'LA PLUME A NOS LECTEURS: SUR L'ORIGINE MAYA DES PREMIERS CALEDONIENS – JEANNINE BOUTEILLE EMBOITE LE PAS A ROGER LUDEAU', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/03/1984, 15. This spurious thesis, which was similarly given voice in this newspaper through the publication of letters written by Ludeau himself during this period (see for example Roger Ludeau, 'LA PLUME A NOS LECTEURS: LES MAYAS AVANT LES CANAQUES', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/09/1982, 16), was clearly designed to fundamentally undermine the legitimacy of claims by the Kanak people to political independence and land and other special rights based on their status as the first occupants and the indigenous people of the country. It also provided a discursive vehicle for the assertion of the racial superiority of white people over Kanak people, and consequently of legitimising the perpetuation of white dominance and the hierarchically ordered matrix of power relations entrenched in New Caledonian society at the time.

⁵⁶ Note also that in the lead up to the event several letters to the editor were published by the newspaper warning of its purportedly dangerous political implications for the Territory from the perspective of the local 'loyalist' 'European' population. See Justin Guillemard, 'LA PLUME A NOS LECTEURS: JUSTIN GUILLEMARD ET LE 24 SEPTEMBRE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/09/1982, 6; 'LA PLUME A NOS LECTEURS: LA REVENDICATION DU SUD – LE DEMONTAGE DES ARGUMENTS ET UNE MISE EN GARDE POUR LE 24 SEPTEMBRE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/09/1982, 5.

⁵⁷ Thus, in an article entitled '*POUR LES CANAQUES RASSEMBLES LE 24 SEPTEMBRE: LA VILLE FAIT PARTIE DE LA TERRE DU SUD*', LNC identified two 'themes' (under the day's purported overall theme as '*une fête culturelle*') as having been elaborated in the various political and 'customary' speeches. The first theme the paper identifies is: '*la reconnaissance de l'appartenance coutumière de la terre de la ville de Nouméa à des propriétaires claniques*'.⁵⁷ The second theme is identified as: '*la maturité du peuple canaque, ce qui sous entendait son droit à disposer de lui-même*.' '*POUR LES CANAQUES RASSEMBLES LE 24 SEPTEMBRE: LA VILLE FAIT PARTIE DE LA TERRE DU SUD*', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/09/1982, 6.

⁵⁸ 'LA COUTUME AVANT L'HORAIRE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/09/1982, 6.

*geste avait pour but de bien montrer la reconnaissance par tous les clans canaques du droit de propriété coutumier aux clans revendicateurs.*⁵⁹

The similarities in form, nature and ‘customary’ significance between this ceremony and those held at the beginning of *Mélanésia 2000* are clearly apparent from this description.⁶⁰ However, in contrast to LNC’s coverage of the 1982 event, the ‘mainstream’ print-media coverage of *Mélanésia 2000* in 1975 did not represent these ceremonies as *revendicatives* or as posing a threat to the established overarching socio-political status quo, as seen in Chapter One.⁶¹

As had been the case for *Mélanésia 2000*’s main festival in 1975, the organisers of the 24 September 1982 event had expressly invited all of New Caledonia’s ethno-cultural groups to attend,⁶² with the caveat that (as stated by Eloi Machoro): ‘[n]ous ne voulons pas dans cette manifestation d’organismes qui ont combattu les aspirations du peuple canaque’.⁶³ As seen in Chapter One, the coverage of *Mélanésia 2000* by the daily newspapers tended overall to emphasise the success of the festival in terms of the large, multi-ethnic public it purportedly attracted. In contrast, LNC’s coverage of the 1982 event underlined the small proportion of ‘Europeans’, particularly locals, purportedly in attendance.⁶⁴ The newspaper maintained that the reasons for this lack of ‘ethnic variety’

⁵⁹ ‘POUR LES CANAQUES RASSEMBLES LE 24 SEPTEMBRE : LA VILLE FAIT PARTIE DE LA TERRE DU SUD’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 27/09/1982, 6.

⁶⁰ As both events were held in the same broad territorial area (Noumea and surrounds), a key role was played in both instances by the ‘gens du Sud’, effectively acting as the ‘*maîtres de la terre*’ in ‘customarily’ welcoming the groups from elsewhere in a ceremony performed in front of a Kanak *case* constructed by that group for this purpose.

⁶¹ Another contrast is apparent between these events when one considers the challenge in 1982 in the public domain (through the publication by LNC’s of the letters of ‘*Mme Bouteille*’) of the ‘customary’ merits of the claims of the ‘gens du Sud’ involved in the FI 24 September event and the then recently rearticulated land claim in relation to the Noumea area. In 1975, no indication appeared in the local press of any such contestation of the ‘customary’ legitimacy of the people (and the groups they were representing) acting in the role of the ‘*maîtres de la terre*’ of the Noumea area.

⁶² Moreover, just prior to the event in 1982, LNC published a communiqué issued by the *Conseil de gouvernement* which stated: ‘[L]e Conseil de gouvernement, ayant été invité par son Vice-Président M. Jean-Marie Tjibaou à participer à la fête culturelle du 24 septembre, demande à la population Calédonienne, toutes ethnies confondues, d’assister nombreuse à cette manifestation sur la place des Cocotiers à Nouméa.’ ‘LA POPULATION INVITEE A LA FETE CULTURELLE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 23-26/09/1982, 2.

⁶³ Machoro identifies the RPCR and *Fraternité Calédonienne* as two such bodies. ‘LE 24 SEPTEMBRE SUR LA PLACE DES COCOTIERS: LE F.I. VEUT EN FAIRE UNE MANIFESTATION CULTURELLE OCEANIENNE – LA FETE COMMENCERA PAR UN OFFICE CONCELEBRE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 21/09/1982, 5.

⁶⁴ The paper did acknowledge the large crowd, indicating that the organisers totalled the number of attendees at eight- to ten-thousand people, while ‘other estimations’ placed the figure at four- to five-

in the crowd were the event's '*caractère exclusivement politique dans le sens de l'indépendance kanake et socialiste et son objectif de reprendre « possession » de Nouméa*', which '*n'ont pas tellement séduit.*'⁶⁵ LNC also identified the apparent decision by '*la plupart des Calédoniens d'origine non mélanésien*' not to attend the event as a consequence of various statements made the day before on FR.3 Radio by a number of individuals, including in particular the use of the word '*propriétaires*' in relation to the Kanak groups laying claim to the Noumea area.⁶⁶ According to LNC, this word was '*mal apprécié*' by '*nombre d'auditeurs*'.⁶⁷ The newspaper concluded ironically in this connection: '*[i]l va falloir que l'Académie française songe à redéfinir certaines notions ou mots tels que propriété ou culture...*'⁶⁸

The FI event did, however, aim to incorporate the active participation of representatives of the local migrant communities from other Pacific countries as performers (rather than simply as spectators) alongside Kanak delegations from throughout the *Grande Terre* and the Islands.⁶⁹ It can in this respect be distinguished from *Mélanésie 2000*. This difference might be viewed as reflecting a broader trend which saw an increasing

thousand. However, the newspaper maintained that when the Senator Lionel Cherrier (one of the FNSC's leaders) characterised the event as a '*fête de fraternité*', '*il a quelque peu exagéré le tableau*'. For, according to LNC: '*le rassemblement de la place des cocotiers a été essentiellement mélanésien. Les Européens y étaient rares et hormis quelques personnalités plus ou moins politiques, les Calédoniens non Mélanésiens ne s'y sont guère rendus. La plupart des Européens rencontrés étaient plutôt des Métropolitains séjournant ici pour une durée limitée.*' '5 000 OU 10 000, MAIS PEU D'EUROPEENS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/09/1982, 8. This was also indirectly confirmed by *Le billet de l'Affreux Jojo* in the same edition, which opened as follows: '*[p]endant ce long week-end, faut dire ce qui est, de nombreuses personnes ont profité du beau temps pour aller s'assouplir les jointures et les poumons en brousse. Normal, non ?*' 'Le billet de l'Affreux Jojo', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/09/1982, 36.

⁶⁵ '5 000 OU 10 000, MAIS PEU D'EUROPEENS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/09/1982, 8.

⁶⁶ The newspaper also identifies the characterisation of the event as being designed to mark the Kanak '*deuil*' by the (Kanak) journalist, 'Wales Cotra' (presumably Wallés Kotra), on this radio station as similarly having deterred non-Kanak '*Calédoniens*' from attending. In this connection, LNC also states that reference to the 24 September as a day of Kanak '*deuil*' had otherwise generally been avoided by the organisers of the event. 'LES MOTS QUI GENENT', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/09/1982, 8.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ In the lowest square of the *Place des Cocotiers* (the *Square Orly*) the delegations from the South of the archipelago ('*Sud ; Maré ; Tiga*') were installed. The lower-middle square (*Place de la Marne*) was dedicated to the central areas of the archipelago ('*Centre ; Adjé ; Lifou*'). The upper-middle square (*Place Courbet*) was devoted to delegations representing other '*Iles océaniques*'. Finally, in the upper square ('*Place Feillet*') were the delegations from the archipelago's North ('*Paci ; Nord ; Ouvea*'). 'LE PROGRAMME DU 24 SEPTEMBRE DU FRONT INDEPENDANTISTE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/1982, 2. The groupings of Kanak delegations in this instance can be contrasted to other groupings (such as that in the CCT's *Mwakaa*, discussed in Chapter Two and Annex 6) which often group together the Loyalty Islands and separate them from groups from the *Grande Terre*.

emphasis in the progressive elaboration and articulation of the Kanak independence movement on the geographical, cultural, historical and political links between, on the one hand, New Caledonia and the Kanak people and, on the other, the surrounding (increasingly decolonised and independent) countries and indigenous peoples of the Pacific region, as opposed to links to France, Europe and the West.⁷⁰ In 1982, the organisation of the fourth Festival of Pacific Arts,⁷¹ to be held in New Caledonia in December 1984, was well underway and was clearly inscribed in this same trend, particularly given the FI's political project at the time: to realise Kanak Socialist Independence by 24 September 1984.

The organisation of the fourth Festival of Pacific Arts was the responsibility of a specially created body, the *Association pour le 4^e Festival des Arts du Pacifique en Nouvelle-Calédonie*. Key members of this Association included: Roch Wamytan (President); Jacques Iékawé (Director); and Jean-Marie Tjibaou (member of the '*Comité Directeur*').⁷² In 1982/83, the Festival's organisation also became one of the missions of the newly instituted '*établissement public*', the *Office Culturel, Scientifique et Technique Canaque* (OCSTC).⁷³ The OCSTC has subsequently been identified as the predecessor (and, indeed, the '*ancêtre*') of the ADCK.⁷⁴ The OCSTC was created by one of the seven '*ordonnances*' relative to New Caledonia that were promulgated by Mitterand's Socialist Government in October and December 1982, '*afin d'accélérer le*

⁷⁰ In addition to the conception of this 1982 event articulated by Eloi Machoro (according to LNC's report) as a means for participants to '*vivre la culture calédonienne, en prouvant [...] que la Calédonie c'est la Calédonie et non la France*', the inclusion of these other Oceanic groups was explained by Machoro as underlining the fact that '*la Calédonie fait partie du Pacifique et non d'un autre océan*.' Machoro was also quoted directly by LNC as stating: '*[l]e peuple canaque a des relations millénaires avec les autres Mélanésiens du Pacifique, et avec les autres habitants du Pacifique que sont les Micronésiens et les Polynésiens*.' According to the newspaper, when responding to the proposition that, while he had not mentioned them, '*les Européens*' also contributed to the 'making' of the Pacific, Machoro is quoted as contending that: '*[l]e Caldoche, c'est une partie de la peau du Canaque, qu'il le veuille ou pas, et que le Canaque, lui-même, le veuille ou pas – C'est pourquoi je ne l'ai pas cité – Nous savons tous [...] que ces gens-là, comme nous, pensent que la Calédonie fait partie du Pacifique et de l'Archipel Mélanésien*'. 'LE 24 SEPTEMBRE SUR LA PLACE DES COCOTIERS : LE F.I. VEUT EN FAIRE UNE MANIFESTATION CULTURELLE OCEANIENNE – LA FETE COMMENCERA PAR UN OFFICE CONCELEBRE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 21/09/1982, 5.

⁷¹ The South Pacific Festival of Arts became the 'Festival of Pacific Arts' in 1981.

⁷² See *Pacific 2000*, no. 1, September 1982, 1.

⁷³ See JM Tjibaou and J Roynette, 'Editorial', *Pacific 2000*, no. 2, April 1983, 2; 'Le projet du 4e Festival des Arts du Pacifique', *Pacific 2000*, no. 3, December 1983, 18; Néko Hnepeune, 'Editorial', *Pacific 2000*, no. 4, April 1984, 5; Néko Hnepeune, 'Préface Néko Hnepeune', Office Culturel, Scientifique et Technique Kanak (1984: 11); Tjibaou (1996: 156-157).

⁷⁴ Togna (2008a: 23).

train des réformes pour désamorcer les tensions' in the Territory.⁷⁵ The OCSTC's President was Jean-Marie Tjibaou and its Director was Néko Hnepeune. Its headquarters were located on Noumea's Nouville peninsula in buildings constructed for use during the country's penal settlement.

In an interview in March 1984, Tjibaou highlighted the continuity between the creation of the OCSTC and the Kanak cultural *revendication* launched by *Mélanésie 2000*. Tjibaou also affirmed the intimate interconnection between this development of the Kanak cultural *revendication* and the development of the political *revendication* for Kanak independence during the same period.⁷⁶ From Tjibaou's perspective, the 1982

⁷⁵ Congrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 'L'Assemblée Territoriale: REPERES HISTORIQUES', <www.congres.nc/historique/lassemblee%20territoriale>. Another of these 'ordonnances' created an 'Office foncier', charged with land reform and the restitution of 'traditional' Kanak lands owned by (non-Kanak) settlers. In an interview in March 1984, Tjibaou emphasised the importance of the work of this *Office foncier* for the cultural *revendication* of the Kanak people. He affirmed that: '[I] action de cet office doit permettre la réappropriation par nos clans de nos terres, de leurs territoires traditionnels, de leurs lieux culturels et tabous. On en conçoit l'importance, si l'on se souvient que le système hiérarchique ne peut fonctionner que si une référence spatiale effective correspond à la définition qu'en fournit le discours à travers la tradition. [...] La restauration de nos droits fonciers apparaît donc comme un prérequis de celle de notre culture.' Editorial footnote omitted, Tjibaou (1996: 156). According to the analysis of Gabriel and Kermel, the objective of the reforms brought about by these *ordonnances* was 'de réduire les inégalités sociales les plus criantes, de faire un geste d'ouverture vers les Kanaks et d'améliorer à moyen terme la situation économique de la colonie. Mais si le gouvernement veut hâter les réformes, il les conçoit comme des réaménagements pour empêcher le pourrissement de la situation à court terme. Il n'est nullement question de modification fondamentale du statut colonial [...]'. Gabriel and Kermel (1985: 120-121).

⁷⁶ In this connection, Tjibaou stated: '[d]epuis [*Mélanésie 2000*], les prises de position politiques successives pour l'indépendance ont renforcé la recherche de l'identité revendiquée au niveau humain, spatial et institutionnel.' Tjibaou (1996: 152-153). Note that during the period of the pro-independence majority in the New Caledonian Conseil de gouvernement, a considerable number of 'cultural' projects were initiated. These included the construction of the first 'Melanesian cultural centre' in New Caledonia, built in Tjibaou's own Municipality, Hienghène, and inaugurated in October 1984: see particularly 'IL SE VEUT A LA FOIS UN MUSEE ET UN LIEU DE CREATION – LE CENTRE CULTUREL DE HIENGHENE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/10/1984, 8-9. According to LNC this project was funded and supported by the Territory, the Municipality of Hienghène and by the two Kanak 'tribus' in the area – 'les tribus de Goa et Bouarate': 'POUR UN COUT DE 35 MILLIONS: LE CENTRE CULTUREL DE HIENGHENE VA SORTIR DE TERRE – IL OUVRIRA AVANT LE FESTIVAL DES ARTS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 03/08/1983, 31. It appears from statements made by Tjibaou in an interview in 1981 that this project had previously been blocked by the Territorial administration: Tjibaou (1996: 120). Another project undertaken during this period was the renovation of the traditional, ethnographic-style Territorial Museum in Noumea (devoted principally to the display and conservation of Kanak and Pacific objects): see 'PLUS DE 400 NOUVELLES PIECES DANS LE COLLECTION DU MUSEE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 07/09/1984, 7; 'LE MUSEE A RETROUVE SA CASE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 03/10/1984, 6; 'DEUX CASES ET UNE PIROGUE A L'INTERIEUR DU MUSEE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 07/11/1984, 5; 'LA DEUXIEME CASE DU MUSEE EST TERMINEE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 14/11/1984, 9. Finally, a number of projects proposed by and oriented chiefly towards the country's established non-Kanak communities were also initiated, such as the construction of the local Vietnamese community's 'foyer culturel' and the Bourail Museum (devoted to that area's penal history), 'dont la création fut décidée avec Jean-Marie en écho au centre culturel de Hienghène', according to Barbançon's account: Barbançon (2008: 59). Barbançon highlights Tjibaou's support for these projects in his capacity as the member of the *Conseil de gouvernement*

'ordonnances [...] ont sanctionné la reconnaissance par le Gouvernement du fait autochtone et de l'injustice subie.'⁷⁷ This 'reconnaissance', given concrete expression through institutions such as the OCSTC, was represented by Tjibaou as in turn 'opening the door' to the Kanak people's '*renaissance culturelle*'.⁷⁸ However, at the conclusion of this interview Tjibaou clearly posited '*la nécessité de faire d'abord de notre revendication culturelle une revendication nationale*',⁷⁹ and further affirmed:

[f]orce est de constater que la personnalité culturelle mélanésienne ne pourra atteindre sa vraie dimension que si la société mélanésienne a la capacité de maîtriser son destin. Les offices sont des cadeaux utiles, de bons outils, mais construit-on une personnalité avec des outils ?⁸⁰

In this manner, in the 1984 context, Tjibaou predicated the success of the *revendication* and *épanouissement* of Kanak culture and identity on the realisation of Kanak independence, positing the limited use and value of Government initiatives and institutions such as the OCSTC without the radical political transformation of the country through decolonisation. However, despite the acknowledgement by the French State in the 1983 Nainville-Les-Roches agreement of '*la légitimité du peuple kanak, premier occupant du territoire, se voyant reconnaître en tant que tel un droit inné et actif à l'indépendance*',⁸¹ no such radical political transformation was forthcoming.

As part of the preparations for the fourth Festival of Pacific Arts, a Kanak cultural centre (referred to variously in LNC and other publications as the '*centre culturel mélanésien*', the '*centre culturel canaque*' and the '*centre culturel kanak*', but later renamed '*Ko We Kara*', as discussed below), was constructed at Noumea's northern outskirts, on the Ducos peninsula. This centre, which included buildings designed to house the offices of the OCSTC, was to serve as the venue for various parts of the

responsible for the Territorial budget as proof of the falsity of the view that Tjibaou was exclusively occupied by the promotion of Kanak culture: Barbançon (2008: 58-59). In relation to the various local museographical initiatives proposed during this period, see also 'LA POLITIQUE CULTURELLE DU TERRITOIRE – LA REALISATION DE DEUX NOUVEAUX MUSEES EST EN BONNE VOIE – Mais celui des arts et traditions populaires attendra encore...', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/05/1984, 12.

⁷⁷ Tjibaou (1996: 153).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 160.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ See Association pour la fondation d'un institut Kanak d'histoire moderne (1984: 107); Gabriel and Kermel (1985: 130).

Festival of Pacific Arts, including notably the 'customary' ceremonies of welcome between representatives of the Kanak people and the Festival's foreign delegations from throughout the Pacific.⁸²

In September 1982 the *Association pour le 4^e Festival des Arts du Pacifique en Nouvelle-Calédonie* produced the first edition of a quarterly publication in preparation for the 1984 Festival entitled '*Pacific 2000*' – a title clearly drawing on the same inspiration as *Mélanésie 2000* and *Calédonia 2000*.⁸³ Several texts included in this first edition can be seen to have linked the Festival's organisation and significance in New Caledonia implicitly with the Kanak people's contemporary struggle for political independence, particularly through the affirmation of Kanak indigeneity.⁸⁴ The articulation of this discourse was facilitated by the nature of the Festival of Pacific Arts itself, being an event which '*concerne les cultures de peuples indigènes de la région*'.⁸⁵

In consequence, as highlighted in this first edition of *Pacific 2000*, New Caledonia's communities of Pacific Islander immigrants were to participate in the Festival in association with the delegations from their '*pays d'origine*', rather than being incorporated into New Caledonia's (Kanak) delegation – '*la participation du pays est*

⁸² 'LE CENTRE CULTUREL KANAK ENTRERA EN SERIE EN OCTOBRE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 19/09/1984, 8.

⁸³ *Pacific 2000*, no. 1, September 1982. A total of six editions of this publication were produced between September 1982 and October 1984. In his preface to the official program for the fourth Festival of Pacific Arts, Tjibaou also refers to '*Pacific 2000*' in his discussion of the significance and orientations of the event – see 'Préface Jean-Marie Tjibaou' in Office Culturel, Scientifique et Technique Kanak (1984: 5).

⁸⁴ The first edition's editorial, signed by Roch Wamytan (as the President of the *Association pour le 4^e Festival des Arts du Pacifique en Nouvelle-Calédonie*), affirmed in a carefully phrased passage that the *Conseil des Arts du Pacifique*'s choice of New Caledonia to host the Festival in 1984 '*revêt une importance particulière en cette période où le peuple kanak cherche la voie de son développement et de son plein épanouissement dans un "PACIFIQUE" à construire avec l'ensemble des autres peuples indigènes : c'est pour cette raison que le titre retenu pour ce IV^e FESTIVAL sera : FESTIVAL 1984 : PACIFIC MY NEW HOME.*' Roch Wamytan, 'Pour quoi ? Pour qui ?', *Pacific 2000*, no. 1, September 1982, 2. A text in this edition devoted to an explanation of the fourth Festival's theme and orientations affirmed somewhat more directly that the Festival should facilitate the integration of (indigenous) Pacific peoples into '*notre ensemble commun*' – '*l'Océanie*' – '*à la fois pour nous-mêmes et pour que nous soyons pris en considération par rapport aux Occidentaux, aux Africains, aux Asiatiques... Le 4^e Festival des Arts du Pacifique, en 1984, doit donner cette dimension de notre revendication de liberté et d'indépendance, et, à partir du patrimoine, assurer le destin culturel de notre peuple.*' A little later, this text affirmed, echoing of Tjibaou's presentation of the *Mélanésie 2000* project in 1974, that the 1984 Festival '*doit redonner notre odeur à notre terre, l'odeur de notre peuple à notre Pays. Ici, en Nouvelle-Calédonie, nous voulons l'embaumer de l'odeur indigène, pour qu'elle redevienne le pays Kanak imprégné du sens de notre parole, de l'harmonie de nos chants et du rythme de nos danses.*' 'INFORMATION SUR LE FESTIVAL', *Pacific 2000*, no. 1, September 1982, 14.

⁸⁵ 'INFORMATION SUR LE FESTIVAL', *Pacific 2000*, no. 1, September 1982, 16.

celle du peuple indigène du pays'.⁸⁶ On the other hand, a number of articles published in the lead up to the Festival by LNC indicate that a venue in Noumea was to be provided during the Festival to allow for the active participation of New Caledonia's non-Kanak and non-Oceanic communities in the event.⁸⁷ However, this aspect of the Festival does not feature in the official texts produced by its local organisers, such as *Pacific 2000* and the Festival's official program,⁸⁸ the emphasis still being firmly placed on the indigenous character, organisation and orientation of the event, with the New Caledonian delegation representing the Kanak people.

As early as September 1982, the highly conservative, right-wing and staunchly anti-independence weekly publication, *Corail*, denounced the fourth Festival of Pacific Arts as: '*ce fameux festival des Arts du Pacifique, dont il n'est plus un secret pour personne que ce sera avant tout un rassemblement politique des peuples du Pacifique.*'⁸⁹ This paper went on to affirm in the same article:

[d]éguisé sous les dehors innocents et attrayants de la culture, de l'identité culturelle et du folklore **par les gauchistes**, ce festival-promotion des arts ne sera en fait que la promotion de la politique kanake d'indépendance, cautionnée par tous les pays participants.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ 'FESTIVAL DES ARTS : « LA MECANIQUE EST LANCEE » dit Jacques Iekawe', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 12/07/1984, 13; 'UNE REUNION SUR LA PARTICIPATION DES « GROUPES ETHNIQUES NON OCEANIENS »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 16/08/1984, 4. Note also that certain local non-Kanak Oceanic groups (including a group of Wallisian dancers and Fijian singers) performed during the regional mini-festival held at Montravel in preparation for the fourth Festival of Pacific Arts: see 'AU MINI FESTIVAL DE MONTRAVEL, PROGRAMME CHARGE ET AFFLUENCE IRRÉGULIERE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/08/1984, 6-7; 'DANSES, CHANTS ET ARTISANAT POUR LE MINI-FESTIVAL DE TIGA', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/08/1984, 3. In relation to the organisation of the delegation from Wallis and Futuna (that was to comprise 124 people living on those islands and 150 people now living in New Caledonia), see 'AU FESTIVAL DES ARTS – UNE DELEGATION WALLISIENNE ET FUTUNIENNE CONSEQUENTE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 10/10/1984, 10.

⁸⁸ See Office Culturel, Scientifique et Technique Kanak (1984).

⁸⁹ Original emphasis, Caroline, 'VOYAGE A L'INTÉRIEUR DU FRONT INDÉPENDANTISTE', *Corail*, no. 131, 24/09/1982, 30.

⁹⁰ Original emphasis, *ibid.*, 31. However, the ultimate responsibility and 'blame' for the potential political consequences of the pro-independence Kanak involvement in the Festival is attributed by the paper to 'les socialistes'. *Corail* thus states: '[L]e clivage des peuples se faisant par la culture, c'est intentionnellement que les socialistes l'ont favorisé, enfermant les Mélanésiens dans leur "droit" à la différence. La différence culturelle entraînant automatiquement la différence de conception politique, le gouvernement ne peut l'ignorer, c'est en connaissance de cause qu'il a mis dans les mains des indépendantistes un outil inestimable de revendication : l'organisation de ce festival, pour leur permettre de se démarquer encore plus des autres ethnies. Où mèneront cette ségrégation et ce culte exacerbé de la différence culturelle ? Logiquement à une séparation complète entre les deux blocs ethniques du territoire, et, à long terme, à

In contrast, LNC avoided such categorical denunciations of the Festival during this period, although its position became increasingly overtly critical in the immediate lead up to the event. One significant example is constituted by the newspaper's coverage in early August 1984 of the Kanak *jeu scénique* programmed to take place during the Festival.⁹¹ The relevant article included the reproduction of what appears to be a working draft of the synopsis and stage directions for the *jeu scénique*, prefaced by an introductory passage written by LNC, printed in bold.⁹²

From the synopsis, it is apparent that the conception of this *jeu scénique* drew heavily on the 1975 *jeu scénique* performed during *Mélanésie 2000, Kanaké*.⁹³ Gorges Dobbelaere and Pierre Bernard were again involved in its production.⁹⁴ The 1984 *jeu scénique* was conceived with two principal parts. The first part was to depict pre-colonial Kanak 'traditional' life and culture in the form of the same 'Boenando' sequence as in the first *tableau* of *Kanaké*. The second part, entitled 'Liberté', was to depict through the medium of contemporary dance (referred to as 'ballet') the alienation of Kanak people in the modern, urban and industrialised capitalist context brought about by the arrival of 'les blancs' and concluding with the Kanak reappropriation of the country and their future, symbolised in their construction of a 'traditional' *grande case*. The synopsis states in this connection that: '[u]n texte, en français et en canaque

l'indépendance kanake. Mais les socialistes ont tout simplement oublié de prévenir qu'ils n'étaient plus du tout d'accord pour l'indépendance. Les promesses électorales, n'est-ce pas... vous comprenez. Les socialistes ont donné aux enfants une belle et grosse boîte d'allumettes mais interdit de mettre le feu aux rideaux.' Original emphasis, *ibid.* This newspaper's discourse clearly mobilises a number of characteristic colonialist and racist tropes, infantilising Kanak people and representing them as incapable of agency independent of outside agitation and 'interference'. It bears strong similarities to the discourse articulated in the coverage of *Mélanésie 2000*'s *jeu scénique* published by LNC and LJC discussed in Chapter One.

⁹¹ 'ÉCRIT PAR DES EUROPÉENS, LE BALLET MODERNE CANAQUE VA SURPRENDRE : DÉMAGO SHOW AU FESTIVAL – LE SPECTACLE D'OUVERTURE SERA UNE NIAISERIE ÉCOLO-GAUCHISTE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04-05/08/1984, 1; 'LE SPECTACLE QUI NOUS ATTEND AU FESTIVAL', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04-05/08/1984, 10. Note that it appears that some of the mini-festivals held in preparation of the 1984 Festival also incorporated the performance of so-called '*jeux scéniques*', treating themes of colonisation and decolonisation within the local context – see for example 'LE MINI FESTIVAL DE CANALA', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 28/08/1984, 5.

⁹² 'LE SPECTACLE QUI NOUS ATTEND AU FESTIVAL', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04-05/08/1984, 10.

⁹³ Note that *Mélanésie 2000* was directly referenced in the synopsis. Moreover, in the lead up to the Festival the *jeu scénique* was referred to as '*Kanaké*', although in the official Festival program it was entitled '*Wâao*'. See, for example, 'LES TEMPS FORTS DU FESTIVAL DES ARTS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 07/08/1984, 2; Office Culturel, Scientifique et Technique Kanak (1984: 56-59).

⁹⁴ 'LE SPECTACLE QUI NOUS ATTEND AU FESTIVAL', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04-05/08/1984, 10; Office Culturel, Scientifique et Technique Kanak (1984: 59).

explique la signification de cette case, symbole de la nation reconstruisant dans la liberté.’⁹⁵ The title ultimately given to the *jeu scénique* was ‘Wââo’,⁹⁶ signifying ‘grande case’ in *paicî*.⁹⁷ At the very end of the *jeu scénique* a ‘Boria finale’ was programmed, in which ‘tous les acteurs et tous les spectateurs seront conviés à danser ensemble’.⁹⁸

While this final dance mirrors that at the end of *Kanaké*, the 1984 *jeu scénique* does not depict the reconciliation and radical transformation of the relationship between (white) coloniser and (Kanak) colonised through the ‘customary’ *accueil* of the former by the latter. Rather, the Kanak people alone are represented as determining and constructing their future and that of their country, symbolised through the *grande case* as an independent, Kanak nation. Only after this *case* has been constructed does the synopsis state: ‘[c]ette case, les canaques veulent l’élargir pour recevoir tous leurs amis.’⁹⁹

In its introduction to this part of the *jeu scénique*, the synopsis partially signals this difference when it affirms:

[a]lors que « Mélanésie 2000 » rappelait avec vigueur les conditions dans lesquelles le peuple canaque avait perdu sa liberté, cette seconde partie de notre spectacle indique plutôt la voie dans laquelle peuvent s’engager les Mélanésien pour la reconquérir. [...] Face à une civilisation qui ne correspond ni à leurs aspirations profondes, ni aux caractéristiques économiques de leur pays, c’est par un retour aux

⁹⁵ ‘LE SPECTACLE QUI NOUS ATTEND AU FESTIVAL’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04-05/08/1984, 10.

⁹⁶ Office Culturel, Scientifique et Technique Kanak (1984: 56-59).

⁹⁷ According to Leblic, this *Paicî* term ‘peut recouvrir indifféremment les deux notions de clan et de lignage, tout en désignant également l’ancienne grande case des hommes.’ Leblic (2000: 50, note 2). See also Bensa (1997: 85). Note that the signification of this term was not stated in the Festival’s official program: see Office Culturel, Scientifique et Technique Kanak (1984: 56-59).

⁹⁸ ‘LE SPECTACLE QUI NOUS ATTEND AU FESTIVAL’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04-05/08/1984, 10. According to the synopsis, in this last part: ‘[l]e maître des cérémonies appelle tous les spectateurs à se rassembler dans la Boria finale. « Vous qui venez des terres où le soleil se lève, Vous qui venez des terres où le soleil se couche, Vous qui venez des terres plus loin que l’horizon, Je vous appelle ! Ce soir, les querelles s’apaisent, Ce soir, nous ne formons plus qu’un seul peuple, Venez vous joindre à nous ! Que la grande spirale de la Boria Soit vivante Comme la volonté de paix qui nous anime ! »’.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

*valeurs traditionnelles de leur peuple que les canaques peuvent
restructurer leur nation et poser les fondements de leur avenir.*¹⁰⁰

The pro-Kanak independence tennor of the 1984 *jeu scénique* is thus readily apparent from the draft synopsis reproduced by LNC in August. The change in the depiction of the process and agents of the country's future decolonisation and emancipation can be explained by reference to the change in the socio-political context and the way in which the Kanak independence movement had developed within that changing broader context during the period between 1975 and 1984.¹⁰¹

LNC was highly critical of this non-‘traditional’ and politically inspired and motivated ‘*spectacle qui nous attend au festival*’.¹⁰² Indeed, a front-page headline in August rans: ‘ÉCRIT PAR DES EUROPÉENS, LE BALLET MODERNE CANAQUE VA SURPRENDRE: DÉMAGO SHOW AU FESTIVAL – LE SPECTACLE D’OUVERTURE SERA UNE NIAISERIE ÉCOLO-GAUCHISTE’.¹⁰³ Significant parallels can be identified between this discourse and that articulated nine years earlier by LNC in relation to *Mélanésie 2000*’s *jeu scénique*.

The ‘politicisation’ of the fourth Festival of Pacific Arts signalled by the newspaper in relation to the Festival’s *jeu scénique*¹⁰⁴ (similarly in echo of the newspaper’s coverage

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Note, however, that the Kanak nationalist thrust of the *jeu scénique* is substantially less explicit in the information provided in relation to this event in the Festival’s official program, which, for example, refers to the construction of the *grande case* as the construction of the Kanak people’s ‘*nouvelle patrie*’, rather than their new ‘nation’, ‘*dans laquelle ils inviteront leurs amis d’aujourd’hui et de demain*’: see Office Culturel, Scientifique et Technique Kanak (1984: 59). On the other hand, Tjibaou inscribes the Festival within the contemporary context of the Kanak struggle for independence in his preface to the program, stating: ‘[c]ompatriotes des quatres millénaires ! Compatriotes des trois derniers siècles ! Soyez les bienvenus dans l’un de nos pays, Kanaky. Notre peuple est fier de vous accueillir. Nos enfants ouvrent de grands yeux pour vous admirer. Ce 4^e Festival est un grand moment de la montée de la conscience océanienne. [...] La croissance de notre conscience océanienne fait que vous trouverez, chez vos frères d’ici, une recherche et une revendication pour la maîtrise de leur propre destin. Que cela [sic] ne vous trouble pas car, pour la plupart d’entre vous, c’est déjà un vieux sentier.’ ‘Préface Jean-Marie Tjibaou’ in Office Culturel, Scientifique et Technique Kanak (1984: 5). Note also that this publication is attributed to the Office Culturel, Scientifique et Technique **Kanak**, rather than the Office Culturel, Scientifique et Technique **Canaque**.

¹⁰² ‘LE SPECTACLE QUI NOUS ATTEND AU FESTIVAL’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04-05/08/1984, 10.

¹⁰³ ‘ÉCRIT PAR DES EUROPÉENS, LE BALLET MODERNE CANAQUE VA SURPRENDRE: DÉMAGO SHOW AU FESTIVAL – LE SPECTACLE D’OUVERTURE SERA UNE NIAISERIE ÉCOLO-GAUCHISTE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04-05/08/1984, 1.

¹⁰⁴ ‘LE SPECTACLE QUI NOUS ATTEND AU FESTIVAL’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04-05/08/1984, 10.

of *Mélanésie 2000*) also dominated its coverage of the uncertain fate of the Festival in light of the evolution of the local political context. This uncertainty grew particularly acute during 1984, when successive positions in support of or in opposition to the event were taken by political parties and groups of all persuasions, as a function of their shifting political strategies and the changing political situation in the country.¹⁰⁵ In September 1984, the pro-independence movement formed a new coalition, the *Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste*, which affirmed its intention to withdraw from the country's established political institutions, mount a '*boycott actif*' of the Territorial elections in November and institute a 'Provisional Government of Kanaky'. Although there was division within the pro-independence movement in relation to the Festival,¹⁰⁶ the FLNKS ultimately decided against its boycott on the condition that '*l'aspect politique de la situation du peuple kanak*' be integrated into the Festival's organisation and orientations, including through the participation of representatives of the FLNKS and the Provisional Government of Kanaky in the official '*accueil*' of the Festival's foreign delegations.¹⁰⁷ This in turn provoked the withdrawal of the support and cooperation of the RPCR-dominated Municipal Council of Noumea, vital to the Festival's realisation.¹⁰⁸ In the wake of the FLNKS's '*boycott actif*' of the elections and the ensuing political turmoil and widespread civil unrest and insurrection throughout the

¹⁰⁵ This is discussed in 'VICTIME DE LA POLITIQUE – LE FESTIVAL DES ARTS EST REPORTE', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/11/1984, 34.

¹⁰⁶ This division was, moreover, highlighted by LNC. See, for example, 'MENACES SUR LE FESTIVAL', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/09/1984, 3.

¹⁰⁷ See 'LE FLNKS MET LA MAIN SUR LE FESTIVAL POUR EN FAIRE UNE TRIBUNE POLITIQUE', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 29-30/09/1984, 1; 'LE FLNKS A CONVAINCU LE COMITE ORGANISATEUR – LE FESTIVAL DES ARTS SERA AUSSI POLITIQUE', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 29-30/09/1984, 4; 'VICTIME DE LA POLITIQUE – LE FESTIVAL DES ARTS EST REPORTE', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/11/1984, 34.

¹⁰⁸ See 'FESTIVAL DES ARTS – ROGER LAROQUE REÇU MERCREDI PAR LE HAUSSAIRE', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 02/10/1984, 3; 'IL FAUT CHOISIR DIT LA MAIRIE DE NOUMEA – FESTIVAL OU POLITIQUE ! – LES ORGANISATEURS DOIVENT SE DECIDER AVANT LE 20 OCTOBRE', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 10/10/1984, 1; 'LA MAIRIE DE NOUMEA NE SOUTIENDRA PAS UN FESTIVAL POLITISE', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 10/10/1984, 6; 'LES TRAVAUX DE PREPARATION DU FESTIVAL SUSPENDUS PAR LA MAIRIE DE NOUMEA', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 25/10/1984, 7; 'LE MAIRE DE NOUMEA DEMANDE LE REPORT DU FESTIVAL', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 22/11/1984, 1, 3. Note that the Municipality and the RPCR had previously threatened to withdraw support for the Festival if the date of the Territorial elections was moved – see 'VICTIME DE LA POLITIQUE – LE FESTIVAL DES ARTS EST REPORTE', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/11/1984, 34.

archipelago, the High-Commissioner released a last-minute communiqué on 25 November indicating the indefinite postponement of the Festival.¹⁰⁹

On the same page as LNC's reproduction of this communiqué appears an article reporting on the arson the previous evening of one of the two 'traditional' Kanak *cases* that had been constructed in October as part of the Kanak cultural centre at Ducos.¹¹⁰ The newspaper questions whether this act was in retaliation for the arson the day before of the 'traditional' Wallisian '*falé*' that had been constructed by the Wallisian community near their '*foyer*' at Magenta, with materials brought especially from Wallis and Futuna, to serve as the location for the 'customary' welcome of the Festival delegation from those islands.¹¹¹ This episode, while relatively minor and marginal in the broader context of the events occurring throughout New Caledonia at this time, highlights the mounting tensions between the country's Kanak and immigrant populations (including those of Oceanic origin) and the strong symbolism of the construction and destruction of such 'traditional' buildings,¹¹² illustrating the intimate

¹⁰⁹ 'VICTIME DE LA POLITIQUE – LE FESTIVAL DES ARTS EST REPORTE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/11/1984, 34.

¹¹⁰ The *case* set alight had been constructed by a group from Canala. The second *case* had been constructed by a group from Saint-Louis. These *cases* were situated near the 'modern' buildings of the centre, dominated by a large, multi-functional hall with a prominent roof, the design of which was partially inspired by 'traditional' Kanak architecture. See 'LA PLUS GRANDE TOITURE DU TERRITOIRE POUR LA CULTURE MELANESIENNE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 14/04/1984, 30; 'LE CENTRE CULTUREL KANAK ENTRERA EN SERVICE EN OCTOBRE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 19/09/1984, 8; 'DEUX CASES POUR LE FESTIVAL', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 16/10/1984, 1; 'CONSTRUITES PAR LES GENS DE SAINT-LOUIS ET DE CANALA – DEUX CASES TRADITIONNELLES AU CENTRE CULTUREL CANAQUE DE DUCOS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 16/10/1984, 10; 'EST-CE EN REPRISAILLES DU FALE WALLISIEN ? UNE CASE DU CENTRE CULTUREL DETRUITE PAR UN INCENDIE VOLONTAIRE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/11/1984, 34.

¹¹¹ See 'AU FESTIVAL DES ARTS – UNE DELEGATION WALLISIENNE ET FUTUNIENNE CONSEQUENTE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 10/10/1984, 10; 'LE FALE DU FOYER WALLISIEN DETRUIT PAR UN INCENDIE CRIMINEL', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/11/1984, 9; 'EST-CE EN REPRISAILLES DU FALE WALLISIEN ? UNE CASE DU CENTRE CULTUREL DETRUITE PAR UN INCENDIE VOLONTAIRE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/11/1984, 34. Subsequent to this earlier incident, the decision was taken to withdraw the participation of the delegation from Wallis and Futuna in the Festival – see 'LES WALLISIENS S'ETAIENT DEJA RETIRES DU FESTIVAL SAMEDI', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/11/1984, 35.

¹¹² This was highlighted from the Wallisian side by LNC's reports. For instance, the paper noted that the withdrawal of the participation of Wallis and Futuna in the Festival was attributed by members of the community to the arson of the '*falé*', and quotes from them as explaining: '« [c]’était l’image de l’identité culturelle de Wallis et Futuna. C’était aussi le symbole de la volonté des Wallisiens et des Futuniens de participer au Festival des Arts. Cet incendie a été ressenti comme un acte criminel, un bafouement des valeurs culturelles et un blocage du dialogue. » On soulignait également « la valeur symbolique de ce *falé*, élément coutumier du Territoire de Wallis et Futuna et sa valeur de symbole national. »' 'LES WALLISIENS S'ETAIENT DEJA RETIRES DU FESTIVAL SAMEDI', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/11/1984, 35. In terms of the awareness and nature of the symbolism of the 'traditional' Kanak *case* at

interconnection between ‘politics’, ‘identity’, ‘culture’, ‘custom’ and the physical implantation of communities in specific places.

On the same day as the release of the High-Commissioner’s communiqué signaling the postponement of the fourth Festival of Pacific Arts, the first Provisional Government of Kanaky was instituted in secret by the FLNKS, with Tjibaou as its President, and on the 1 December the Provisional Government first formally raised the Kanaky flag.¹¹³ On 5 December, ten Kanak men of Tjibaou’s home ‘*tribu*’, including two of his brothers, were killed by ‘loyalists’ in an ambush. Nevertheless, the FLNKS ordered the removal of road-blocks throughout the Territory and entered into negotiations with the French State. On 12 January 1985, the iconic pro-independence leader Eloi Machoro was assassinated, along with Marcel Nonnaro, by French special police forces (the GIGN) and a state of emergency was declared in New Caledonia.¹¹⁴

In February 1985, the *Conseil des Arts du Pacifique* agreed that the fourth Festival of Pacific Arts would be held in Tahiti, French Polynesia, from 29 June to 15 July.¹¹⁵ This timing coincided not only with the anniversary of the ceding of sovereignty by the Tahitian King, Pomare V, to France on 29 June 1880 and with the first anniversary of French Polynesia’s accession to ‘internal autonomy’ status within the French Republic on 29 June 1984, but also with the 14 July – France’s national day. The Festival in Tahiti was thus given a decidedly ‘loyalist’/pro-French flavour by its local organisers (who included notably Gaston Flosse, then President of the French Polynesian

this time, the editorial in the first edition of the OCSTC’s journal (devoted to Kanak culture and entitled significantly ‘*La case : patrimoine kanak*’) published earlier in 1984 affirmed: ‘[r]éminiscence actualisée d’un passé plein de traditions, la case kanake de notre époque demeure à travers sa structure et ses formes le symbole : de prestige, d’unité, d’accueil, d’organisation sociale. [...] Exaltation d’un passé parfois nostalgique, la case demeure au cœur de la terre kanake l’expression pure d’une civilisation.’ K Ipere, ‘La case kanake’, *La case : patrimoine kanak*, no. 1, 1984, 5, 9. Recall also the central position of the ‘*flèche faïtière*’ in the recently created FLNKS/Kanaky flag.

¹¹³ Comité Pierre Declercq (1991: 11-12).

¹¹⁴ Bensa (1990a: 112-115); Comité Pierre Declercq (1991: 12-13); Leblic (2003: 304).

¹¹⁵ ‘LE FESTIVAL DES ARTS A TAHITI – POSE DES PROBLEMES FINANCIERS AUX DELEGATIONS DU PACIFIQUE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 18/02/1985, 9.

Government and the head of the Festival's local organising committee),¹¹⁶ despite strong local opposition from pro-independence political figures.¹¹⁷

The *Association pour le 4^e Festival des Arts du Pacifique en Nouvelle-Calédonie* appears to have been dissolved in February.¹¹⁸ In mid-May, a new association, was constituted to organise the New Caledonian delegation to the Festival, supported and funded by the now 'loyalist'-dominated New Caledonian Territorial Assembly.¹¹⁹ This association's President was the prominent Kanak figure and RPCR politician, Auguste Parawy Reybas.¹²⁰ The politics engaged through the organisation of this new New Caledonian delegation is exemplified by the fact that it was pluri-ethnic/-cultural, rather than exclusively Kanak/indigenous.¹²¹ At the end of May, Tjibaou officially announced the FLNKS boycott of the Festival in Tahiti,¹²² and it appears that the majority of the Kanak groups which had previously been associated with the country's delegation to the

¹¹⁶ Ibid; 'LA POLYNESIE PREPARE « SON » FESTIVAL DES ARTS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/05/1985, 34. A 'loyalist'/pro-French bias is also readily apparent in LNC's coverage of the event. This bias is substantially stronger and more overt than it had been in the paper's coverage of the Festival throughout 1984 and in previous years.

¹¹⁷ 'LE MAIRE DE PAPEETE DIT NON AU FESTIVAL DES ARTS – IL REFUSE DE PRETER SES ECOLES, SES PLACES ET SON PERSONNEL MUNICIPAL', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/06/1985, 8; 'L'ATTITUDE DE JEAN JUVENTIN N'ARRETERA PAS GASTON FLOSSE – LE FESTIVAL DES ARTS AURA TOUT DE MEME LIEU A TAHITI', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/06/1985, 26; 'LES INDEPENDANTISTES TAHITIENS VEULENT BOYCOTTER LE FESTIVAL DES ARTS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 07/06/1985, 6; 'QUAND LA CRITIQUE POINTE SON NEZ...', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/06/1985, 21; 'LE FESTIVAL DES ARTS A TAHITI – LE FRONT DES OPPOSANTS AU FESTIVAL A ECLATE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 28/06/1985, 30; 'DIX-NEUF PAYS OU TERRITOIRES ATTENDUS A TAHITI', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29-30/06/1985, 8.

¹¹⁸ 'UNE DELEGATION CALEDONIENNE IRA AU FESTIVAL DES ARTS DU PACIFIQUE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/05/1985, 18.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ It appears, for example, that the 'artisans' sent by New Caledonia as part of its delegation were exclusively non-Kanak. See 'UNE DELEGATION CALEDONIENNE DE 150 PERSONNES AU FESTIVAL DES ARTS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 06/06/1985, 19; 'LA DELEGATION SERA PLURI-ETHNIQUE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/06/1985, 8; 'Joli succès des artisans calédoniens au village du Taaoné', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/07/1985, 10; 'les danseurs calédoniens – Boudés à leur première sortie mais applaudis au Taaone', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/07/1985, 6-7; 'POESIE ET PARODIE DE VAUDEVILLE AU PROGRAMME DU THEATRE DE L'HEURE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/07/1985, 8-9. Note that despite the clear political inscription of the organisation of New Caledonia's delegation to the Festival (and, indeed, of the Festival overall, as it was organised in French Polynesia), LNC's coverage only treated the pro-independence (FLNKS and French Polynesian) opposition to the event as political in character. In contrast, the newspaper expressly affirmed the respect of the (posited) division between 'culture' and 'politics' by the RPCR figures involved in New Caledonia's participation in the Festival. See, for example, 'LA DELEGATION SERA PLURI-ETHNIQUE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/06/1985, 8.

¹²² 'J.M. TJIBAOU ET SES AMIS DU FESTIVAL', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 01-02/06/1985, 11.

Festival in 1984 refused to participate in this 1985 delegation.¹²³ New Caledonia's delegation was led by the Kanak RPCR politician, Simon Loueckhote, and was accompanied to Tahiti for the combined festivities on the 29 June for the Festival's opening ceremony and the celebration of the first anniversary of French Polynesia's accession to 'internal autonomy' status by the RPCR's most prominent figures – Dick Ukeiwé, Jacques Lafleur and Jean Lèques.¹²⁴ FLNKS figures Yeiwéné Yeiwéné, Françoise Machoro and Louis Kotra Uregeï were also present in the country for the counter-event organised by the Polynesian pro-independence movement on the same day.¹²⁵

In September 1985, the FLNKS participated in the Territorial elections which saw the institution of the Fabius–Pisani Statute. This statute provided for a future referendum on the country's accession to 'independence in association with France' by the end of December 1987, and divided the archipelago into four politico-administrative regions

¹²³ 'UNE DELEGATION CALEDONIENNE DE 150 PERSONNES AU FESTIVAL DES ARTS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 06/06/1985, 19. Although note the commentary on this by RPCR representatives in, for example, 'LA CALEDONIE AU FESTIVAL DES ARTS DU PACIFIQUE - Le bilan est positif pour les organisateurs calédoniens', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/07/1985, 2.

¹²⁴ The delegation was also accompanied by Joseph Tidjine, Auguste Parawy Reybas, Robert Moyatea, Robert Paouta and Max Frouin: '186 CALEDONIENS AU FESTIVAL DES ARTS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/06/1985, 10. LNC quoted Ukeiwé as having identified the relatively large size of New Caledonia's delegation to the Festival as 'proof' that '*les Calédoniens sont conscients qu'ils ne peuvent plus continuer à être victimes de rêves*', concluding: '[u]ne fois de plus la raison des Calédoniens a eu le dessus sur les démagogies et, je peux même dire, le racisme'. 'D. UKEIWE DE RETOUR DE PAPEETE : EN ALLANT AU FESTIVAL, LES CALEDONIENS ONT FAIT ECHEC AU RACISME', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 03/07/1985, 27.

¹²⁵ LNC quoted Yeiwéné as having characterised the New Caledonian delegation to the festival as '*folklorique*', and Uregeï as having expressed a position '*qui tendait à démontrer que les délégations calédoniennes actuellement à Papeete ne représentaient culturellement rien, qu'elles avaient « bravé les interdits coutumiers » et n'étaient venues que parce qu'elles avaient été payées et pour des raisons politiques.*' 'LES INDEPENDANTISTES AUSSI...', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 01/07/1985, 5; 'AU MICRO DE L'ENVOYE DE RADIO-AUSTRALIE A PAPEETE – KOTRA UREGEI S'EST MONTRE MENAÇANT ENVERS LES DELEGATIONS CALEDONIENNES', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/07/1985, 31. The report published by the newly created pro-independence weekly paper, *Bwenando* – *le premier journal de Kanaky*, was vitriolic – see 'HONTE POUR LE PEUPLE KANAK AU FESTIVAL DES ARTS DE TAHITI', *Bwenando*, no. 3, 25/07/1985, 15-16. Note that in a communiqué released by the RPCR (and reproduced by LNC) in relation to the arson during the Festival of a *case* on Maré belonging to leaders of the Maréan group within the New Caledonian delegation (identified by LNC as being '*en représailles contre le Festival*') those responsible were referred to as '*terroristes*' inspired by '*l'intolérance et la lâcheté*': 'LE R.P.C.R. DENONCE L'INTOLERANCE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/07/1985, 6. Gaston Flosse also reportedly sent a letter to the *case*'s owners expressing his support and his '*indignation la plus vive devant de tels actes qui témoignent de la bassesse et du fanatisme de leurs auteurs*': 'Après l'incendie des maisons des responsables du groupe de danse de Maré – CONSTERNATION ET SILENCE DANS LA DELEGATION CALEDONIENNE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/07/1985, 8.

with a relatively large degree of autonomy.¹²⁶ While the FLNKS gained control of all but the Southern region in these elections, the RPCR still held the majority in the South as well as in the Territorial Assembly.

The March 1986 French legislative elections ushered in a two-year period of 'cohabitation' between a Socialist President – François Mitterrand – and a right-wing Government and Prime Minister – Jacques Chirac. The return of the right wing to power led to the institution of the first Pons Statute, passed by the French National Assembly in July 1986, which maintained the four-way regional subdivision of New Caledonia while reducing the powers of these regions. It also provided for a local referendum in 1987 on New Caledonia's accession to either full independence or to a status of large autonomy within the French Republic.¹²⁷ The first Pons Statute repealed the majority of the 1982 *ordonnances*, including that creating the *Office foncier*.¹²⁸ In its place, the Statute instituted the '*Agence de développement rural et d'aménagement foncier*',¹²⁹ which, as noted by Bensa and Wittersheim, was '*chargée, en principe, d'organiser la restitution des terres à leurs ayants droit kanak*', but which, '*dans cette période, s'est pourtant engagée dans une réattribution de certaines propriétés à des colons*'.¹³⁰ Local tensions and unrest mounted, particularly following the French Government's institution of tight military surveillance and control of Kanak '*tribus*' and its move away from previous policies designed to promote economic '*rééquilibrage*' within the Territory in favour of the Kanak population.¹³¹

¹²⁶ Loi n° 85-892 du 23 août 1985 sur l'évolution de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 24 August 1985, 9775, <<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/>> ; <<http://www.congres.nc/textes-fondamentaux>>; Leblic (2003: 304).

¹²⁷ Loi n° 86-844 du 17 juillet 1986 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 19 July 1986, 8927, <<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/>> ; <<http://www.congres.nc/textes-fondamentaux>> ('*Loi n° 86-844 du 17 juillet 1986 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*').

¹²⁸ Ibid., article 49.

¹²⁹ Ibid., article 29.

¹³⁰ Editorial note in Tjibaou (1996: 245, note 1).

¹³¹ Bensa (1990a: 119); Leblic (2003: 304).

The *ordonnance* creating the OCSTC¹³² was not repealed by the first Pons Statute.¹³³ Nevertheless, progressive statutory changes made in 1985 and 1986 altered the internal functioning and constitution of the institution, and were used in January 1987 to install Auguste Parawy Reybas as the President of the OCSTC's '*Conseil d'administration*'.¹³⁴ This in turn led to the nomination and designation of Tito Tikouré as the OCSTC's Director, replacing Néko Hnepeune,¹³⁵ and to the engagement by this public institution of a very different politics of Kanak culture and identity. Thus, by the end of January 1987, LNC ran a full-page article outlining the sweeping changes planned by the Office's new *Conseil d'administration*.¹³⁶ These changes included a new name for the OCSTC, which was to become the '*Office Calédonien des Cultures Océaniques*' (although '*Océaniques*' was ultimately omitted from its name when this change was made formally). In explaining this change, Parawy Reybas is quoted by LNC as stating that '*[L]e mot canaque est une insulte pour nous, les anciens*', and as indicating that '*[c]e changement de dénomination a marquée notre volonté d'ouverture vers les autres cultures océaniques qui sont autour de nous*'.¹³⁷ Moreover, the newspaper quotes from another member of the new *Conseil d'administration*, Yves Magnier, as affirming that: '*[L]a création de cet office avait eu, à mon sens, pour conséquence d'instaurer une sorte d'apartheid culturel sur le Territoire*'.¹³⁸

¹³² Ordonnance n°82-879 du 15 octobre 1982 portant création d'un office culturel, scientifique et technique canaque, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 17 October 1982, 3109, <<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/>>.

¹³³ See *Loi n° 86-844 du 17 juillet 1986 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, article 49.

¹³⁴ 'Premier conseil d'Administration de l'Office Culturel Scientifique et Technique Canaque – M. Parawy-Reybas élu président', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 07/01/1987, 23.

¹³⁵ Arrêté n° 686 du 16 mars 1987 nommant le Directeur de l'Office Culturel, Scientifique et Technique Canaque, *Journal Officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, 24 March 1987, 381, <<http://www.juridoc.gouv.nc>>.

¹³⁶ 'Plus ouvert, rebaptisé, et avec un village de cases à Ducos – Le nouveau « look » de l'Office Culturel', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/01/1987, 2.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid. Parawy Reybas would similarly affirm in his June editorial in the Office's journal that the creation in 1982 of the OCSTC as part of '*la reconnaissance de l'identité culturelle Kanak*': '*[c]'*était entamer un processus autoritaire d'apartheid, créer un mur artificiel entre Calédoniens, introduire la confusion entre différences culturelles et choix politiques, et préparer des affrontements entre Kanaks d'un côté et non-Kanaks de l'autre, irréductiblement opposés et étrangers. Nous nous sommes sentis déchirés par cette orientation donnée à l'Office Culturel. Nous ne voulons pas de frontière entre Calédoniens.' 'Editorial – Allocution de M. Auguste Parawi Reybas, Président de l'Office Culturel', *Les cases – patrimoine calédonien*, no. 1, June 1987, 6.

In keeping with the Office's new title, the privileged position of Kanak culture in its work and orientations was to be largely removed and the remodelled institution was to be given two '*missions essentielles*', identified by LNC as: '*affirmer la diversité culturelle calédonienne et promouvoir une culture calédonienne d'ensemble*'.¹³⁹ These changes were also to be translated physically into the site of the cultural centre at Ducos. In November 1985, the two 'traditional' Kanak *cases* on the site had been completely destroyed by arson.¹⁴⁰ The OCSTC's new *Conseil* proposed to have these *cases* rebuilt, along with additional *cases* representing '*mélanésien*' groups from throughout the archipelago, as well as '*cases*' representing the country's other ethno-cultural communities (and so including, for example, '*la case de pionniers*' and '*les cases des îles du Pacifique*').¹⁴¹ The construction of this so-called '*village de la Paix*',¹⁴² or '*village fraternel*',¹⁴³ was characterised by Parawy Reybas in the first edition of the Office's quarterly journal, '*Les cases – patrimoine calédonien*' (the OCSTC's previous publication having been entitled '*La case – patrimoine kanak*'), in June 1987 in the following terms:

[c] 'est ici que le monde entier doit voir que la diversité fait la richesse et que l'union dans l'action fait la civilisation. C'est cela notre conquête du séjour paisible. C'est cela notre fierté. Vive la Calédonie. Vive la République Française.¹⁴⁴

In the same spirit, the Ducos cultural centre was itself given a new name: '*Ko We Kara*', identified as signifying in the '*langue Kapone*' '*le lieu où l'on fait le rassemblement pour les échanges*'.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ 'Plus ouvert, rebaptisé, et avec un village de cases à Ducos – Le nouveau « look » de l'Office Culturel', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/01/1987, 2.

¹⁴⁰ Comité Pierre Declercq (1991: 15).

¹⁴¹ 'Plus ouvert, rebaptisé, et avec un village de cases à Ducos – Le nouveau « look » de l'Office Culturel', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/01/1987, 2. See also 'Le Grand Chef Moyatéa à Monsieur le Ministre Bernard Pons', *Les cases – patrimoine calédonien*, no. 1, June 1987, 5; 'Spécial KO WE KARA', *Les Cases*, no. 1, June 1987, 10-19.

¹⁴² 'Plus ouvert, rebaptisé, et avec un village de cases à Ducos – Le nouveau « look » de l'Office Culturel', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/01/1987, 2.

¹⁴³ 'Le Grand Chef Moyatéa à Monsieur le Ministre Bernard Pons', *Les cases – patrimoine calédonien*, no. 1, June 1987, 5.

¹⁴⁴ 'Editorial – Allocution de M. Auguste Parawy Reybas, Président de l'Office Culturel', *Les cases – patrimoine calédonien*, no. 1, June 1987, 7.

¹⁴⁵ 'Le Grand Chef Moyatéa à Monsieur le Ministre Bernard Pons', *Les Cases – Patrimoine Calédonien*, no. 1, June 1987, 5; 'Spécial KO WE KARA', *Les cases – patrimoine calédonien*, no. 1, June 1987, 10. See also Tito Tikouré, 'IDEOLOGIE "WAOCA"', *Les cases – patrimoine calédonien*, no. 2, October

As signalled by the choice of a phrase from this Kanak language from the South of the *Grande Terre* (including the Noumea region and the site of the centre itself) the construction of the various Kanak and non-Kanak ‘cases’ on the site was to be inscribed in a ‘*démarche coutumière*’, in which a special role and place was to be given to Kanak ‘customary’ representatives claiming authority over the Southern region¹⁴⁶ – including notably in this instance the so-called ‘*grand chef du Sud*’, Robert Moyatéa.¹⁴⁷ Moyatéa had also been associated with the delegation sent to the fourth Festival of Pacific Arts in French Polynesia and was by this time engaged with the RPCR.¹⁴⁸ In contrast, the Kanak group associated by the OCSTC in 1984 with the construction of the case representing the Southern region belonged to the rival ‘customary’ group from Saint-Louis (including Martin Wamytan), engaged with the FLNKS.¹⁴⁹

Pons’s referendum on independence took place in September 1987. In allowing all French citizens resident in New Caledonia for at least three years to vote in this so-called ‘autodetermination referendum’,¹⁵⁰ the RPR-dominated national Government’s policy (couched in a legitimating discourse of ‘equal rights’ and ‘democracy’) in relation to New Caledonia’s political future can be seen to have mirrored the new cultural policy engaged locally by the RPCR-controlled OCSTC. The denial of Kanak specificity and their particular position and rights as the country’s indigenous, colonised people during this period led the FLNKS to engage in a campaign of civil disobedience

1987, 6. Note that according to LNC’s report, in May 1987 an association – the ‘*Association Ko We Kara*’ – was formed by ‘*des responsables et des animateurs d’associations culturelles ainsi que des représentants des différentes ethnies du Territoire*’, with the following aim: ‘*soutenir et participer au programme d’animation du Centre [Ko We Kara].*’ ‘*L’association Ko We Kara est née*’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/05/1987, 13.

¹⁴⁶ The ‘*grande case du Sud*’ to be constructed on the site was consequently to be given the most prominent position and function. According to Tito Tikouré in the Office’s journal: ‘*[c]ette case se veut y être aussi le symbole de la présence des clans, vrais propriétaires terriens de la région KA – PU – ME et DRUBEA.*’ Tito Tikouré, ‘*La Case du Sud*’, *Les cases – patrimoine calédonien*, no. 1, June 1987, 20.

¹⁴⁷ ‘*Plus ouvert, rebaptisé, et avec un village de cases à Ducos – Le nouveau « look » de l’Office Culturel*’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/01/1987, 2; ‘*Le Grand Chef Moyatéa à Monsieur le Ministre Bernard Pons*’, *Les cases – patrimoine calédonien*, no. 1, June 1987, 5; Tito Tikouré, ‘*La Case du Sud*’, *Les cases – patrimoine calédonien*, no. 1, June 1987, 20-21.

¹⁴⁸ ‘*LES DISCOURS COUTUMIERS – « CEUX QUI ONT SU OUBLIER LEURS DIFFERENDS... »*’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/06/1985, 8.

¹⁴⁹ ‘*CONSTRUITES PAR LES GENS DE SAINT-LOUIS ET DE CANALA – DEUX CASES TRADITIONNELLES AU CENTRE CULTUREL CANAQUE DE DUCOS*’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 16/10/1984, 10.

¹⁵⁰ See, in this connection, the comments made by Tjibaou in May 1988: Tjibaou (1996: 247-252).

and a series of peaceful protests that were brutally repressed by the French State.¹⁵¹ The FLNKS boycott of the referendum resulted in a very high rate of abstention (particularly within the Kanak population).¹⁵² Nevertheless, the fact that the overwhelming majority of voters elected for New Caledonia to remain within the Republic¹⁵³ served the French Government as the pretext for the second Pons Statute, promulgated in January 1988, which was designed to further marginalise pro-independence participation and control within the local political institutions and which provided for no future evolution of New Caledonia's political status.¹⁵⁴ On the FLNKS's reading, the Statute would also allow for the abolition of the special Kanak rights, civil status and land ownership recognised at that time.¹⁵⁵ Tjibaou consequently proclaimed this Statute to represent '*la tombe de notre peuple en tant que tel*.'¹⁵⁶

The Statute also formally abolished the OCSTC (through the repeal of the 1982 *ordonnance* which had created it) and replaced it with a new institution, the '*Office calédonien des cultures*', '*chargé de la conservation et de la promotion de l'ensemble des cultures représentées dans le territoire*.'¹⁵⁷ According to an FLNKS communiqué and reports published in the pro-independence paper, *Bwenando*, 7500 books and papers produced by the OCSTC were removed from the Office by '*les milices walisien*' and taken to the municipal dump to be incinerated on the orders of the RPCR and the

¹⁵¹ Comité Pierre Declercq (1991: 15); Tjibaou (1996: 226227).

¹⁵² Based on the voting tallies reproduced by LNC, only 59.1% of the people enrolled to vote did so. 'Le scrutin d'autodétermination – Référendum du 13 septembre 1987', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 15/09/1987, 4.

¹⁵³ Based on the same tallies, 96.7% voted to remain within the French Republic, 1.7% voted for independence and 1.6% voted informally: *ibid*.

¹⁵⁴ See Loi n°88-82 du 22 janvier 1988 portant statut du territoire de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 26 January 1988, 1231, <<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/>>, <<http://www.congres.nc/textes-fondamentaux/>> ('Loi n° 88-82 du 22 janvier 1988 portant statut du territoire de la Nouvelle-Calédonie'); Bensa (1990a: 120).

¹⁵⁵ See Tjibaou (1996: 250-251); 'EDITORIAL – ETHNOCIDE', *Bwenando*, nos 106-107, 12/04/1988, 3.

¹⁵⁶ Tjibaou (1996: 250). Note that this statement was made by Tjibaou in an interview given a few days after the French army put a bloody end to the Ouvéa hostage crisis in May 1988.

¹⁵⁷ Loi n° 88-82 du 22 janvier 1988 portant statut du territoire de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, articles 6 and 146. See also Décret n° 88-420 du 22 avril 1988 pris en application de l'article 6 de la loi n° 88-82 du 22 janvier 1988 portant statut du territoire de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et relatif à l'office calédonien des cultures, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 24 April 1988, 5471, <<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/>> .

Office's Director, Tito Tikaré, in February 1988.¹⁵⁸ This act, along with the creation of the *Office calédonien des cultures*, was denounced by Bwenando as 'ethnocide' and identified as forming part of the broader '*politique d'assimilation du peuple kanak*' engaged by Pons and '*la Droite*' since 1986.¹⁵⁹ As highlighted by this paper, Pons had previously proclaimed in the French National Assembly in his capacity as the Minister for Overseas Departments and Territories that the Kanak people did not now exist as a result of biological '*métissage*'.¹⁶⁰ The FLNKS communiqué relating to this so-called '*autodafé*' consequently stated:

[a]près avoir nié l'existence du peuple Kanak, le Ministre PONS et le RPCR se trouvaient dans l'obligation de détruire le patrimoine culturel de notre peuple afin d'éliminer les preuves de leur mensonge.¹⁶¹

The local politico-institutional system prescribed by the second Pons Statute was to have been instituted following the regional elections in April/May 1988, which were timed to coincide with the national Presidential elections. However, the FLNKS decided on the '*boycott actif*' of these elections, during which a series of violent events took place on Ouvéa, culminating in the bloody resolution by the French army of the resulting hostage crisis. The outcome of this episode, in which a total of 25 people lost their lives,¹⁶² was strongly influenced by the national political context of the Presidential elections.¹⁶³ The shock felt locally in the wake of this episode served as the

¹⁵⁸ 'EDITORIAL – ETHNOCIDE', *Bwenando*, nos 106-107, 12/04/1988, 3-4; 'NOUVELLES DU FRONT – COMMUNIQUE', *Bwenando*, nos 106-107, 12/04/1988, 5; 'SOCIETE – ETHNOCIDE – AUTODEFE A L'OFFICE CULTUREL', *Bwenando*, nos 106-107, 12/04/1988, 6-7.

¹⁵⁹ 'SOCIETE – ETHNOCIDE – AUTODEFE A L'OFFICE CULTUREL', *Bwenando*, nos 106-107, 12/04/1988, 6. As noted subsequently by Fote Trolue, '*ils [les non-Kanak] dissent aux Kanak de ne pas mélanger culture et politique mais eux [les] mélange parfaitement, notamment quand il y a eu le transfert de compétence au niveau de Ko Wé Kara où il y a eu de nombreux documents du patrimoine culturel qui ont été brûlés ! Le geste est inexcusable mais brûler était un acte politique*': Trolue and Caihe (1995: 162). See also Bensa (2000: 31).

¹⁶⁰ 'EDITORIAL – ETHNOCIDE', *Bwenando*, nos 106-107, 12/04/1988, 3. See also Bensa (1995a: 123); Bensa (2000: 9).

¹⁶¹ 'NOUVELLES DU FRONT – COMMUNIQUE', *Bwenando*, nos 106-107, 12/04/1988, 5.

¹⁶² Four *gendarmes* were killed by Kanak militants when their attempt to occupy the local *gendarmerie* was met by resistance. Twenty-seven *gendarmes* were taken hostage and held in caves near the '*tribu*' of Gossanah. In the course of '*Opération Victor*', the ruthless attack on the caves led by the special forces of the French army to free the hostages, two *militaires* and 19 Kanak militants were killed. Some of the Kanak militants were reported to have been killed after their surrender. Leblic (2003: 304-305).

¹⁶³ Bensa (1990a: 121-122); Leblic (2003: 304-305).

catalyst for the opening of negotiations between the FLNKS, the RPCR and the French State in the following months and the conclusion of the Matignon Accords.

ANNEX 5

Politics of the CCT's institutional form and contemporary architecture

An exemplary 'new museum' and 'modernist' building

The articulation of Tjibaou's perspective on Kanak culture and identity in the CCT has been identified as an exemplary expression of the international genres of the 'new museum' and contemporary Western/international 'modernist' and 'humanist' architecture, resulting in questions concerning the political implications of the CCT project given the significant investment and involvement of the French State therein.

Message contends that new museums, which emerged as an institutional 'type' or model from the 1990s (when the CCT itself was conceived and realised), 'aim to be defined primarily against a highly self-conscious image of "newness"'.¹ They are '[o]ften presented as interdisciplinary sites of postmodernity, where subjectivity is presented as contextual and contingent rather than static'.² This new museum model clearly resonates with Tjibaou's philosophy regarding Kanak culture and identity and its incorporation into the CCT. The new museum model is also reflected in the way in which Piano designed the CCT to project his own 'image of Kanak culture as [...] resistant to containment by traditional museological spaces',³ which is echoed in the ADCK's decision to focus on (re)presenting, collecting and facilitating contemporary artistic creation (by named artists)⁴ as a means of breaking with and challenging the politics

¹ Message (2006c: 604).

² Message (2006a: 9). Among the 'key features' shared by new museums, Message highlights 'the incorporation of a self-conscious approach to representation, a heightened political awareness that is informed by postcolonial theories, a unique building that is designed by a high profile architect, and the desire to encourage direct community involvement in relation to the generation of ideas about culture, and the interlinked production of discussions about cultural identity': *ibid.* Message also highlights that '[t]he focus on open configurations, representational strategies, and the general commitment to achieving a convincing, ongoing effect of newness is important for new museums at the level of novelty, as a way to keep audiences coming back and to continually attract others': *ibid.*, 12. In a more critical register, Message maintains that new museums 'tend not to recognize that this preference for newness itself fits within a chronology of modernity and modernization. [...] They exist [...] as deeply compromised, complicated and complex institutions that balance a series of seemingly historical factors and contemporary bureaucracies, boundaries and constituencies at the same time as they project an image of newness to their visitors.' Message (2006c: 605).

³ Message (2006a: 8).

⁴ Jolly (2001: 434).

inherent to the ‘colonial practices and hierarchies of collecting and display’⁵ of Kanak culture and objects in traditional Western ethnographic museums.

Such traditional Western museums, along with libraries, archives and public monuments, were:

built to “perpetuate memory in external deposits”, marking the transition – in Pierre Nora’s terms – from the *milieu de mémoire* of pre-modern times to *lieux de mémoire* instituted by nation-states.⁶

In contrast, new museums:

deploy features of postmodernity to achieve a clear differentiation from museums of the past, which not only privileged singular categories of disciplinarity, but which were produced to glorify the private patron, monarch or state. Indeed, [...] new museums prefer to be understood as similar to each other and relevant to a present context, rather than drawing their significance from the past.⁷

Consequently, Message suggests that ‘new museums may also challenge the continued relevance and role of the nation-state and its boundaries in a contemporary, globalised context.’⁸

This shift in perspective potentially operated by new museums might be seen to resonate particularly strongly with the contemporary New Caledonian context as defined by the Noumea Accord, through which French citizenship and sovereignty in New Caledonia have been paired with and conditioned by New Caledonian citizenship and ‘*la souveraineté partagée*’ for the period covered by the Accord, with the future configuration of citizenship, sovereignty, nationhood and identity in New Caledonia left open. However, in both the Matignon Accords context during the 1990s and the Noumea Accord context since 1998, the implication of the CCT in the politics of nationalism, statehood and identity in New Caledonia has been highly complex and ambivalent. Rather than simply challenging or destabilising ‘the nation-state and its

⁵ Message (2006c: 605).

⁶ Lake (2006: 2). Quotation from Kirk Serge, ‘The Politics of Memory: Black Emancipation and the Civil War Monument’, in Joh R. Gillis (ed.), 1994, *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press.

⁷ Message (2006c: 604-605).

⁸ Footnote omitted, Message (2006a: 9).

boundaries', the CCT might be viewed as serving the divergent impulses and trajectories of both Kanak nationalism and French nationalism (and potentially even 'New Caledonian' nationalism), regardless of their respective potential internal mutations and reconfigurations, including through their mutual accommodation.

The CCT's implication in a French nationalist agenda is especially highlighted by the form and politics of the Centre's modern architecture and its reconfiguration of the politics of 'traditional' Kanak architecture. The CCT's main building designed by Piano has been identified by Brown as a 'great essay in European humanism',⁹ and a testimony to 'world architecture',¹⁰ which leaves the architect's (and, indeed, the French State's) aesthetically and deeply politically motivated 'imprint of modernism' on this Oceanic landscape.¹¹ As stated by Message, who picks up on Brown's critique, Piano 'already had a particular history with French institutions and government, having designed the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris in 1977 with Richard Rogers'.¹² Message highlights that, '[n]ot only is the Pompidou Centre an explicit symbol of social progress and an icon of modernity, but it is also widely accepted as the prototype of the new museum model', having realised Piano's intention to create a dynamic, 'non-monumental building' geared towards the 'democratisation' of the arts.¹³ As seen in Chapter Two, the 'democratisation' of the artistic heritage of the French nation as it develops into the future was also one of the expressed objectives of President Mitterrand's *Grands Travaux de la République*. On Message's analysis, the CCT reflects 'an image of New Caledonia that is democratic-looking and progressive in outlook'.¹⁴ Moreover, 'it appears to offer a symbolic (if not thematic) synchronicity

⁹ Brown (2002: 284). The CCT/ADCK website itself refers to Piano's '*approche humaniste de l'architecture*', affirming that, '[à] travers tous ses projets, il défend une vision personnelle de l'architecture et cherche à accorder ses valeurs esthétiques (importance des éléments immatériels comme la lumière ou la transparence, allusion à la nature dans les formes) aux valeurs des hommes qu'il croise sur son chemin.' Original emphasis, CCT/ADCK, 'Présentation : Le Centre Culturel Tjibaou : Architecture', 2008, <<http://www.adck.nc/presentation/le-centre-culturel-tjibaou/architecture>>. Message notes that, '[i]n addition to providing a physical manifestation of the ideological principles motivating development of the centre, [Emmanuel] Kasarhérou [the CCT's Cultural Director from 1994 to 2011] explains that Piano's building aspires to the principles of a pure architectural modernism, so that the structure appears to lift ephemerally up and away from the ground around it.' Message (2006a: 17).

¹⁰ Brown (1998: 126).

¹¹ Brown (2002: 283).

¹² Message (2006a: 18).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

with the ideological grandeur and impressive scale of the Pompidou Centre', and, by extension, with the modern nation-state of France.¹⁵

The politics of form and space in Piano's CCT building – the 'democratisation' of the 'traditional' Kanak case

Particularly significant to the above arguments is the way in which Piano's architectural appropriation and transformation of the 'traditional' Kanak case has reconfigured its internal politics of form and space.

As discussed in Chapter One, the Kanak case, particularly the *grande case* of the *chef*, has an important and multiform 'traditional' symbolic significance within the broader physical and human geographies of which it forms part.¹⁶ Numerous commentators have identified the *grande case*, its constituent elements and mode of construction, as symbolically representing the 'traditional' Kanak socio-political organisational structure and hierarchy, as well as the stability and 'consensus' posited to characterise and projected strategically onto that structure and hierarchy.¹⁷

Of all the elements which go to make the *grande case*, the *poteau central* has been identified as the most significant, both in terms of its physical size and its symbolic implications.¹⁸ The *poteau central* can be seen to represent metonymically the *grande case* in its entirety.¹⁹ However, the symbolism associated specifically with the *poteau central* itself is linked to figures at the symbolic apex of 'traditional' Kanak socio-political authority, such as the *chef* and the *frère aîné*.²⁰

¹⁵ Ibid. Message does, however, indicate that this understanding of the political implications of Piano's modernist architecture in the CCT is potentially too simplistic.

¹⁶ Moreover, writing in 2000, Bensa identifies the 'traditional' Kanak case in the contemporary context as representing a: '[c]oncentré de toutes les différences culturelles constitutive de l'originalité kanak, [un] logo de la résistance mélanésienne à l'assimilation et [un] véritable fétiche identitaire'. Bensa (2000: 76).

¹⁷ See the discussion in Chapter One. See also Kasarhérou and Klein (2000a: 26).

¹⁸ Boulay (1990a: 103).

¹⁹ In the words of Kasarhérou and Klein: '[q]and le bois [du poteau central] est là, la maison est là'. Kasarhérou and Klein (2000a: 23).

²⁰ Kasarhérou and Klein maintain that the *poteau central* is 'l'élément fondamental' of the *grande case* by reason of the fact that 'l'ensemble de la charpente sera élaboré à partir de cet axe': ibid., 28. Moreover, according to these authors: '[c]omme le fils aîné qu'elle représente, la grande case centralise le pouvoir du clan': ibid., 23. And just as the *poteau central* represents the centre-point and key structural element of the *grande case*, so too, 'l'aîné: figure le centre du groupe. Sa présence ordonne la société qui

In the '*souvenirs de cases*' designed by Piano for the CCT's main building, Bensa identifies a reformulation and 'democratisation' of the 'traditional' Kanak *case*, achieved in part through the 'suppression' of the *poteau central* itself.²¹ Thus, writing in relation to his first-hand involvement in the conceptualisation and design of the CCT as a consultant to the Piano team, Bensa argues that, through its reformulation of the 'traditional' structure of the Kanak *case* and the 'traditional' hierarchical organisation of Kanak space around the *case* and its *allée*, the CCT building proposes a '*nouvelle politique de l'espace*'.²² According to Bensa, rather than following the 'traditional', hierarchical model according to which the Kanak *case* is a private space from which women and men of inferior rank are precluded access,²³ Piano's building is '*démocratique et non-discriminatoire*',²⁴ and '*un espace essentiellement public*'.²⁵ Aligning his own perspective with that of the architect, Bensa contends:

[s]'inspirer de la forme n'impliquait pas qu'on adoptât aussi le contenu, même si certains « coutumiers », consultés par la maîtrise d'ouvrage [l'ADCK] et par l'équipe Piano, l'ont souhaité.²⁶

The political significance of this symbolic projection of the 'democratisation' of Kanak 'tradition' and socio-political organisation in Piano's architectural appropriation and transformation of the 'traditional' Kanak *case* in the modern architecture of the CCT's main building goes beyond the Centre's potential implication in a French nationalist agenda. It can also be seen to echo the tensions and contestation within contemporary Kanak society itself in relation to these very issues in the context of the formal recognition and incorporation of Kanak 'customary' representation into New Caledonia's politico-institutional structure, discussed in Annex 1.

s'organise autour de lui': *ibid.*, 21. A similar schema is outlined by Boulay, who emphasises the link between the *poteau central* and the figure of the *chef*. Boulay contends that: '*le poteau central est richement connoté comme rassembleur des clans, force et image de l'ancêtre, image du chef (de l'aîné), poumon de la case.*' Boulay (1990a: 103).

²¹ Bensa (2000: 76-79). See also Brown (2002: 283).

²² Bensa (2000: 77).

²³ As noted by Kasarhérou and Klein, in contrast to the various '*cases d'habitation*', '*[l]a grande case était strictement interdite aux hommes non-initiés, aux femmes et aux enfants du groupe, mais les hommes initiés d'un autre groupe pouvaient y pénétrer à l'invitation de ceux de la grande maison*': Kasarhérou and Klein (2000a: 36).

²⁴ Bensa (2000: 79).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

ANNEX 6

Politics of the CCT's *aire coutumière*

According to Bensa's account and his analysis of the politics of space realised and embodied in the different parts of the CCT, both the ADCK and the Renzo Piano Building Workshop were

*soucieux de faire du Centre – sur ce point en rupture explicite et assumée avec la règle [de la tradition Kanak] – un espace essentiellement public, réservant au seul périmètre de l'aire coutumière le maintien, à l'ancienne, d'un secteur strictement privé, kanak et sacré.*¹

However, this characterisation of the *aire coutumière* is somewhat overstated. For instance, the public is free to circulate within the *aire coutumière* when the space is not being used for 'customary' ceremonies. If such ceremonies are held when the CCT is open to the public, that public is generally not excluded from entering the *aire coutumière* and effectively participating as spectators from any position around the periphery of the central space formed by the '*allée centrale*', which serves to structure the relative positions occupied (physically and symbolically) by the key actors in such 'customary' ceremonies. Thus, while, as emphasised by Béalo (Gony) Wedoye, the 'customary' ceremonies that take place in the CCT's *Mwakaa* are not '*représentations de coutumes à l'intention des visiteurs*'² (implying rather that they are 'authentic' contemporary expressions of Kanak 'cultural' practice or 'custom'), the presence of the 'external' gaze of the spectator breaks down and renders problematic any division between the so-called 'public' and 'private' areas of the Centre (following Bensa) in terms of the nature and function of those spaces and of the 'culture' presented/represented therein.

Moreover, through the physical realisation of the CCT's *aire coutumière* in a particular, chosen, static configuration, some form of 'representation' could hardly be avoided. According to the CCT/ADCK guidebook to this space, while the *aire coutumière* is not designed to represent or recreate a 'traditional' Kanak '*chefferie*', '*on y retrouve*,

¹ Bensa (2000: 78-79).

² Wedoye (1998b: 20).

comme sur le chemin kanak, les principaux repères culturels.’³ The CCT’s *aire coutumière* is identified by Béalo (Gony) Wedoye as being:

*le symbole du pays, de l’espace kanak où l’on trouvera les ancêtres, le végétal symbolisant des paroles, des discours, des barrières, des flèches faitières au sommet des cases, des conques, tout un ensemble d’éléments de la haute société traditionnelle, celle des chefferies.*⁴

Béalo (Gony) Wedoye also affirms that the CCT’s ‘*zone coutumière est faite pour organiser des cérémonies représentant l’ensemble du pays.*’⁵ Consequently, the precise form given to this *aire coutumière* by the ADCK is unique and original in relation to Kanak ‘tradition’ in the sense that it has been designed in reference to the country and the Kanak people as a whole – a point of reference which did not exist in the ‘traditional’ context in the past. The physical articulation of the site of the *aire coutumière* can thus be understood as one of the chosen means through which to reconcile the problematic representation of Kanak diversity with that of Kanak unity within the landscape and buildings of the CCT.

In certain respects, the CCT and its *aire coutumière* were not without precedent in New Caledonia. As noted in Annex 4, the first Kanak cultural centre, constructed in Hienghène largely on Jean-Marie Tjibaou’s instigation, was inaugurated in October 1984. This Centre itself incorporated a modern building broadly inspired by ‘traditional’ Kanak architecture and two Kanak ‘traditional’ *grandes cases*, constructed by and representing each of the two Kanak ‘tribus’ or ‘chefferies’ in the area: ‘Goa’ and ‘Bouarate’. These ‘traditional’ *cases* were central to the Centre’s inauguration, which was structured around Kanak ‘customary’ ceremonies of welcome and exchange between these two local Kanak groups and the personnel of the new Centre.⁶ The *cases* also play a central function in the Kanak ‘customary’ ceremonies associated with the

³ Kasarhérou and Klein (2000a: 76).

⁴ He also stresses that, ‘*avant tout*’, the Centre’s *aire coutumière* is ‘*un espace vivant*’, the inclusion of which ‘at the heart’ of the CCT is particularly important from the perspective of Kanak people, ‘*pour montrer qu’ils vivent aussi et surtout leur culture au quotidien*’: Wedoye (1998b: 21).

⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁶ See ‘POUR UN COUT DE 35 MILLIONS : LE CENTRE CULTUREL DE HIENGHENE VA SORTIR DE TERRE – IL OUVRIRA AVANT LE FESTIVAL DES ARTS’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 03/08/1983, 31; ‘PREMIER MUSEE DECENTRALISE DU TERRITOIRE – LE CENTRE CULTUREL DE HIENGHENE SORT DE TERRE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 06/03/1984, 10; ‘IL SE VEUT A LA FOIS UN MUSEE ET UN LIEU DE CREATION – LE CENTRE CULTUREL DE HIENGHENE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/10/1984, 8-9.

events held at the Centre since its inauguration. Given its specific regional location and orientation, the inscription of the Hienghène Cultural Centre into the local Kanak socio-political and 'customary' geography was relatively straightforward. However, in the case of the CCT, this inscription was considerably more problematic by reason of the Centre's vocation to pan-Kanak representation and inclusion.

As stated by Togna in 1998:

[L]e Centre doit être un lieu dans lequel toutes les autorités coutumières de ce pays se retrouvent avec une parole unitaire et identitaire. C'est un lieu où doit se développer un discours fédérateur. Chaque Kanak doit pouvoir se retrouver dans ce lieu, qui dans une plante, qui dans une œuvre, qui dans une case, de sorte qu'il n'appartienne à personne en particulier, mais à l'ensemble des Kanak.⁷

In this respect, the CCT (particularly its *aire coutumière*) and the Centre's inauguration can be more readily compared to *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival, both the ADCK and *Mélanésie 2000*'s Organising Committee having worked to rearticulate Kanak 'custom' to accommodate entirely novel, contemporary situations in a pan-Kanak register. As in the case of *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival, the CCT and its inauguration entailed the negotiation of tensions between 'representing' and 'living' Kanak culture and 'custom', in both a 'performative' context and in the context of a delimited space expressly designed and constructed for the purpose. Indeed, the similar conception of the type of interaction to take place in *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival site and in the CCT's *aire coutumière* – as a series of meetings inscribed in Kanak 'customary' practices rather than simply performances or reenactments for the public⁸ – can be identified as having informed the approach adopted by both *Mélanésie 2000*'s Organising Committee and the ADCK in relation to the organisation of these two spaces.⁹

⁷ Togna (1998: 19).

⁸ In relation to *Mélanésie 2000*, see Chapter One and Annex 2. In relation to the CCT's *aire coutumière*, see Béalo (Gony) Wedoye's comments cited above and note Marie-Claude Tjibaou's assertion before the inauguration in 1998 that: '[n]ous sommes toujours dans l'esprit de « Mélanésie 2000. » Le 4 mai, nous ne serons pas en représentation. Nous serons dans la réalité kanak, dans ce qui fait que nous sommes et nous restons Kanak.' Marie-Claude Tjibaou (1998).

⁹ Note also the proximity of the two places in which *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival was held and the CCT later constructed. The particular environment constructed for the 1975 festival is not, however, mentioned in ADCK publications or by Bensa in their accounts of the conceptualisation and realisation of the CCT's *aire coutumière*. Nevertheless, numerous parallels can be identified between the approaches adopted in organising these spaces.

According to Bensa, the initial plan arrived at in the Matignon Accords context of the 1990s by the ADCK for the organisation of the site of the CCT's *aire coutumière* was to represent the eight Kanak *aires coutumières* (as they had been officially recognised subsequent to those Accords)¹⁰ through the construction of one 'traditional' *case* for each *aire*.¹¹ This initial approach can be viewed as broadly analogous to that adopted in relation to the site of *Mélanésie 2000*,¹² despite the fact that the legally recognised and constituted present-day *aires coutumières* did not exist as such in 1975. Writing in 1976, Tjibaou and Missotte identified the regional delegations selected at the mini-festivals and allocated their own *point soleil* at *Mélanésie 2000*'s main festival as '*délégations homogènes venant de zone [sic] géographiques correspondant à des aires culturelles traditionnelles*'.¹³ This characterisation is very similar to Bensa's characterisation of the eight present-day *aires coutumières* (which he provides after briefly tracing the political history of their statutory institution) as '*sous-ensembles géographiques correspondant à des entités sociales et culturelles cohérentes du point de vue des traditions kanak*',¹⁴ and as '*les unités territoriales considérées comme sociologiquement pertinentes*', which '*semblent émaner directement des réalités ethnographiques*'.¹⁵ The *Mélanésie 2000* groupings and those of the present-day *aires coutumières* do not, however, exactly correlate.¹⁶

¹⁰ See the discussion in Annex 1.

¹¹ Bensa (2000: 116); Bensa (2002: 196). Bensa contends that the 'traditional' Kanak *case* had by the 1990s come to represent such a central emblem and symbol of Kanak identity and culture that '*il allait de soi, pour les futurs responsables du Centre, que sur l'espace qui lui était dévolu [l'aire coutumière] devaient se dresser des constructions traditionnelles*': Bensa (2000: 76).

¹² Both might also be compared to the symbolic representation of the unity of the Kanak people in the *Mwâ Kâ* statue through the unison of eight carved sections designed to represent each of these contemporary official *aires coutumières*, as discussed in Chapter Three.

¹³ Tjibaou and Missotte (1976: 36).

¹⁴ Bensa (2000: 116); Bensa (2002: 196).

¹⁵ Bensa (2000: 117); Bensa (2002: 197).

¹⁶ For example, one *Mélanésie 2000* delegation is identified by Missotte as grouping individuals from Koné, Voh and Poya (Missotte (1995b: 70)), areas which are each located in a different present-day *aire coutumière*. It is also important to note that, although Kanak participation in *Mélanésie 2000* as members of the regional delegations sent to the main festival was considerable in relation to the Territory's overall Kanak population (see Missotte (1995b: 81-83)), for various reasons numerous Kanak groups and communities were unable or chose not to participate. The composition of the regional delegations to the main festival was determined through the regional mini-festivals, which generally grouped communities living in relatively close geographical proximity (presumably, at least in part, for reasons of practicality). As a consequence of these factors, the groupings represented by the *points soleil* constructed on the main festival site were, at least to a certain extent, a function of the groups actually participating in *Mélanésie 2000* and other practical concerns, rather than necessarily reflecting any comprehensive and coherent

It is important to note in this connection the lapse in time between *Mélanésie 2000* and the conceptualisation, construction and inauguration of the CCT. According to Bensa, who identifies the political origins of the subdivision of the archipelago and its Kanak population into the contemporary *aires coutumières* in 1983¹⁷ (that is, eight years after *Mélanésie 2000*):

[e]n moins de vingt ans, en effet, les pièces de ce grand puzzle ont acquis une forte identité. Au gré des rassemblements festifs et de la répétition des noms des aires dans les discours, sur les affiches, les tee-shirts ou sur les cartes culturelles de l'archipel, les populations locales ont respectivement intériorisé leur appartenance à chacune de ces entités au point de se présenter désormais toujours sous leurs bannières.¹⁸

Relating this observation to the process of determining the layout of the CCT's *aire coutumière*, Bensa continues:

[p]our les Kanaks, le traditionnel c'est le contemporain dans la mesure où il s'inscrit toujours dans le présent. Rien ne semble en conséquence plus naturel que d'attribuer à chaque aire régionale son espace près d'un bâtiment devant figurer l'ensemble du pays kanak.¹⁹

While the taken-for-granted character of the eight contemporary *aires coutumières* asserted by Bensa (in 2000 and 2002) is apparent in the local print-media coverage of the CCT's inauguration in 1998 and of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative from 2003 onwards (as discussed in Chapter Three), this subdivision has been subject to criticism in relation to the *Sénat coutumier*. For example, Nidoïsh Naisseline wrote an article in relation to the *Sénat coutumier* published in 2005 in the weekly newspaper LI in which he criticised

overarching subdivision of the Kanak population as a whole. In contrast, the CCT's *aire coutumière* (and, indeed, the *Mwâ Kâ* statue) can be clearly identified as having been designed to physically represent the Kanak people as a conceptual whole through the unison of a number of different, internally coherent subgroups.

¹⁷ According to Bensa: '[c]e découpage a été suscité d'abord en 1983 à l'initiative de l'administration de Georges Lemoine [...] et ensuite officialisé par les Accords de Matignon en 1988 pour donner corps au principe d'une instance kanak consultative': Bensa (2000: 116-117) ; Bensa (2002: 196). This description can be contrasted to the discussion in relation to the history of this subdivision briefly outlined in Annex 1.

¹⁸ Bensa (2000: 117); Bensa (2002: 197).

¹⁹ Bensa (2002: 197). The building referred to in the second sentence is that designed by Piano and his team. It might also be noted that, earlier in the same paragraph, Bensa also refers to the CCT's *aire coutumière* itself as a 'lieu à figurer l'ensemble du monde kanak actuel'. See also Bensa (2000: 117).

the present official subdivision of New Caledonia into *aires coutumières* as recent, artificial and arbitrary, from a Kanak perspective.²⁰ Naisseline contends that:

[L]a notion d'aire coutumière est d'utilisation récente et constitue un placage d'une vision administrative et géométrique d'importation, qui privilégie les frontières sur une réalité sociale et spatiale où chaque personne et chaque groupe humain se situent par rapport à des réseaux de relations vécues qui ont plus d'importance que les frontières.²¹

However, for reasons apparently entirely unrelated to any such critiques of the official contemporary *aires coutumières*, only three Kanak *grandes cases* were ultimately constructed on the CCT's *aire coutumière*. According to Bensa, this was a consequence of the considerable logistical and practical difficulties the construction of eight 'traditional' *cases* on the site would have posed.²² On Bensa's account, the choice of three *cases* was designed to correspond to the present-day 'electoral geography' of the country, each representing one of the three New Caledonian Provinces (North, South and Islands), a 'politico-territorial' division that was officially introduced in its current form in 1986 and subsequently further entrenched by both the 1988 Matignon Accords and the 1998 Noumea Accord.²³ Indeed, Bensa maintains that while the reduction in the number of *cases* presented the disadvantage of limiting their possible functions on a practical level,²⁴ it nevertheless presented the (political) advantage, on what Bensa identifies as a more 'ideological' level, '*de faire glisser dans des structures confortées par les Accords de Matignon une aire vouée à la « coutume kanak »*.'²⁵

²⁰ Recall that Naisseline formed the first radical anti-colonial Kanak group, the *Foulards Rouges*, in 1969 and is now a long-standing elected politician, as well as a *grand chef* of Maré.

²¹ Nidoïsh Naisseline, 'Du Sénat coutumier', *Les infos*, no. 148, 05/08/2005, 3. It is also interesting in this connection to recall the disparity between the contemporary *aires coutumières* and the groupings of people into different regional delegations for *Mélanésie 2000*, groupings which were nevertheless identified at the time by the festival's organisers as representing '*delegations homogènes venant de zone [sic] géographiques correspondant à des aires culturelles traditionnelles*': Tjibaou and Missotte (1976: 36).

²² Bensa (2000: 117); Bensa (2002: 197).

²³ Bensa (2000: 118); Bensa (2002: 197).

²⁴ For instance, it would not be possible for these *cases* to act as temporary accommodation for Kanak visiting Noumea.

²⁵ Bensa (2002: 198). See also Bensa (2000: 118).

Several factors render problematic such a physical accommodation and symbolic representation of the Kanak people collectively via three 'traditional' Kanak *cases* representing these three politico-administrative regions in a space dedicated primarily to Kanak 'customary' ceremonies in the country's preeminent Kanak cultural centre. Whether or not one considers the eight official *aires coutumières* as artificial from a Kanak perspective or as corresponding to past and/or present Kanak cultural, linguistic and/or 'customary' realities, the nature of their definition in French law means that these *aires* directly concern Kanak people and identity, their culture and 'customary' structures and authorities. In contrast, the three Provinces are not similarly defined in French law specifically in reference to Kanak people, culture and 'custom'. Indeed, the subdivision of New Caledonia by Province cuts across the boundaries of two of the official Kanak *aires coutumières* themselves.

Furthermore, while the three Provinces are highly significant to Kanak people (as they are to all of the country's inhabitants), this stems primarily from the particular structural framework and equilibrium they impose on the local socio-political and economic situation. Indeed, the territorial subdivision of New Caledonia into these three Provinces, which are endowed with a large degree of politico-administrative autonomy and competence, can be identified as a crucial element of the political agreements reached in both 1988 and 1998 that successfully restored and have maintained relative civil peace in the country throughout the contemporary period. For, by reason of the respective demographic balance between ethno-cultural communities in each of these three regions and the predominant political orientations of those communities, governance of both the Northern and the Islands Provinces is effectively guaranteed in the foreseeable future to Kanak pro-independence political parties, with the Southern Province being controlled politically by the predominantly non-Kanak (and 'European'-dominated) 'loyalists'.

As a consequence of this particular balance, the Northern and Islands Provinces can overall be seen to represent for pro-independence Kanak (who themselves represent the vast majority of the whole country's Kanak population), particularly those living in these regions, a very tangible and concrete step towards the realisation of Kanak self-government and political emancipation, and so, a positive potential category of group identification. On the other hand, given the very different socio-political balance pertaining in the Southern Province, in which Kanak are in the minority, Kanak

perceptions of and potential identification with this politico-administrative region might tend to be considerably more ambivalent, especially given the history of persisting Kanak exclusion from and marginalisation in the urban environment of Noumea (which dominates the Southern Province) and the particularly difficult socio-cultural transformations and challenges experienced by many Kanak people in that environment.

In light of these different factors, the entities formed by each of the three Provinces can be seen to have only a relatively indirect connection to Kanak culture and ‘custom’, particularly when compared to other possible groupings and even when considering ‘culture’ and ‘custom’ as specific fields of politico-administrative action.

Moreover, in contrast to Bensa’s characterisation of the signification of the three *cases* constructed on the CCT’s *aire coutumière*, almost no CCT/ADCK publications refer to the Provinces in this connection. One notable exception does appear in a 2008 *Mwà Vée* editorial written by Gérard del Rio in which he refers to the three *cases* of the Centre’s *Mwakaa* as symbolising: ‘*les trios grandes régions administrative du pays, la province Sud, la province Nord, la province des Îles*’.²⁶ On the other hand, Béalo (Gony) Wedoye maintained in the edition of *Mwà Vée* in print at the time of the CCT’s inauguration that: ‘*ces trois cases [...] représentent les huit aires coutumières du pays*’.²⁷ Similarly, the program for the CCT’s inauguration identifies the three *cases* as representing the eight *aires coutumières*, with one ‘*maison*’ identified as representing the ‘*pays, ou aire Djubea Kapone*’, the second representing ‘*tous ceux qui appartiennent aux terres sises au-delà du pays Djubea Kapone*’ (‘*les pays Xârâcùù, A’jië A’rhô, Païcî Cemuhi*’ and ‘*Hoot Ma Waap*’), and the third representing ‘*les Iles Loyauté, Iaai, Drehu, Nengone*’.²⁸ The CCT/ADCK guidebook to the *Mwakaa* published in 2000 identifies the three *cases* in less precise terms, as respectively the ‘*case des gens du sud*’, ‘*du nord*’ and ‘*des îles*’.²⁹ At the entrance to the CCT’s *aire coutumière*, the text on the explanatory panel states that the three *cases*:

appartiennent et représentent les principaux pays kanak : les pays du Sud qui reçoivent le Centre culturel sur leur terre, les pays du Nord et

²⁶ Del Rio (2008: 2).

²⁷ Wedoye (1998b: 21).

²⁸ Del Rio (1998a).

²⁹ Kasarhérou and Klein (2000a: 66-67).

*ceux des Iles. [...] La barrière de chefferie qui ceinture cet espace symbolise l'unité du pays kanak.*³⁰

The choice and use of the term '*pays*' in this panel is particularly significant. In addition to its meanings in general French usage (which take on particular meanings in the context of New Caledonia, discussed below), the term *pays* has been imbued with specific meanings in relation to Kanak socio-cultural groups and their lands, conceived as inextricably interlinked.³¹ According to Kasarhérou and Klein in the *Mwakaa* guidebook: '[c]haque « *pays* » kanak possède son propre univers, ses mythes d'origine, une parole qui lui est propre.'³² These authors define this concept of Kanak *pays* as follows:

*[l]e pays kanak désigne un groupe social en rapport avec un clan fondateur, lié au tertre d'origine qui donne son nom au groupe. Aujourd'hui, ce nom se confond souvent avec l'espace de résidence du groupe. Parfois, le terme de « *pays* » se réfère à une notion généalogique plutôt que spatiale.*³³

Kasarhérou and Klein also note that, '[d]ans son acception plus générale, le terme s'applique à un ensemble de « *pays* » et peut alors recouper la notion d'aire culturelle. On parle ainsi du « *pays ajië* » ou du « *pays iaai* »'.³⁴ By extension, '*pays Kanak*' has also been used to refer to the archipelago as a whole territory, with an emphasis on the special relationship and rights to the land of Kanak as the indigenous people, but also with an emphasis on the territory as a physical geography imbued with Kanak socio-cultural meanings. '*Kanaky*' is generally used (as it has been since its mobilisation by the Kanak independence movement in 1984) when this concept is given a further, explicitly political and nationalist meaning.³⁵

³⁰ The English version of this text on this sign translates '*pays*' by 'clan' or 'clan groupings'.

³¹ On the other hand, note Naepels's discussion in relation to the Kanak terminology used in the Houaïlou region: Naepels (1998: 175).

³² Kasarhérou and Klein (2000a: 7).

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid. Note that the English version of this book uses the term 'country' to translate '*pays*' in these passages: Kasarhérou and Klein (2000b: 7).

³⁵ As noted by Jacqueline Dahlem in her discourse analysis of a local history manual for New Caledonian students identified by her as having been written by local Kanak and Caldoche specialists in 1992 'in the spirit' of the Matignon Accords: '[p]ays kanak est porteur de connotations affectives (en « *pays* ») et politiques (en « *kanak* »), toutefois moins fortes qu'en *Kanaky*, nom du pays indépendant que se sont choisi les indépendantistes kanak.' In her analysis, Dahlem identifies '*pays kanak*' and '*Nouvelle-*

On the other hand, the term *pays* is also used in relation to New Caledonia as a whole, without necessarily entailing any specific Kanak reference or qualification. Such references to New Caledonia as a *pays* can, however, be interpreted in two principal ways, corresponding roughly to the two principal meanings of this word in general French usage. Thus, it can refer to New Caledonia as a delimited geographical territory, defined primarily in physical terms. Alternatively, it can refer to New Caledonia as a delimited geographical territory inhabited by a specific socio-political collectivity, akin to a nation. The resulting potential semantic ambiguity of the word *pays* when used in reference to New Caledonia (particularly in terms of its potential resonance with the conception of New Caledonia and/or Kanaky as a nation) has been utilised in the formulation of certain Noumea Accord concepts, such as the '*lois du pays*' and the '*signes identitaires du pays*'. Benoît Carteron has also highlighted this strategic use of the term *pays* in the contemporary official and legal discourse and terminologies relating to New Caledonia. As a consequence of the ambiguities of this term in the contemporary New Caledonian context, Carteron contends that:

*[L]e pays prend sens pour les individus en fonction de leurs appartenances revendiquées, de leur attachement à l'entité calédonienne et de leurs convictions politiques. On navigue ainsi entre un pays qui, pour les uns, existait bien avant la présence française, un pays à construire pour d'autres dans l'esprit de l'accord de Nouméa, un pays inexistant encore pour ceux qui ne s'en réfèrent à la seule réalité d'un territoire intégré à la nation française.*³⁶

However, in the context of the CCT's explanatory panel relating to the three *cases* of the *Mwakaa*, the term '*pays*' can be seen to primarily signify different regions and the

Calédonie' as two distinct discursive paradigms identifiable in the manual's treatment of local history. In relation to the latter paradigm, she writes: '*Nouvelle-Calédonie bénéficie d'une neutralité légitimée par les dictionnaires et les encyclopédies. Il est le nom de ce pays dont on peut raconter l'histoire.*' Dahelm contends that, '*[m]is en contact dans un même objet institutionnel, les deux désignants du même pays tendent au même statut par un phénomène d'assimilation réciproque. Nouvelle-Calédonie perd de sa neutralité et de sa légitimité « naturelle » et gagne les connotations historico-politiques qui président à son existence. Derrière le pays kanak s'estompent les connotations politiques liées au mouvement de revendication indépendantiste tandis que devient possible une existence légitime.*' However, Dahelm ultimately concludes in relation to the text of this history manual that: '*[L]e pays kanak a certes conquis une légitimité, mais la Nouvelle-Calédonie reste souveraine*'. Dahlem (1996: 126-127).

³⁶ Carteron (2008: 198).

country as a whole imbued with specific meanings in relation to Kanak socio-cultural groups and their lands.

The signification of the three *cases* and the other elements of the CCT's *Mwakaa* is also closely linked to their relative physical positions.³⁷ These relative positions are articulated by the CCT/ADCK guidebook to the *Mwakaa* predominantly in terms of a 'traditional' Kanak frame of reference, relating in particular to the position of the '*maîtres de la terre*' on which the CCT and its *Mwakaa* have been constructed. The same 'traditional' frame of reference was also central to the organisation by the ADCK of the CCT's official inauguration, which largely took place on the *Mwakaa* site.

A primary position and role accorded to the '*maîtres de la terre*'

In his discussion of the process through which the organisation of the *aire coutumière* was conceptualised and determined by the ADCK, Bensa maintains that, had a '*logique strictement traditionnelle*' been adopted, only the '*clan des maîtres du sol*' would have been allowed to build its 'house' on the (then unoccupied) site, even though they could subsequently have accepted the installation of other '*clans*'.³⁸ Bensa contends that such an initial appropriation of the site exclusively by the group with antecedent Kanak land rights was considered to be ill-adapted to its intended purpose as a '*lieu à figurer l'ensemble du monde kanak actuel*'.³⁹ According to the rationale outlined by Bensa:

[p]our passer du clan au « peuple », de l'unité privée à la collectivité politique, telle qu'elle s'est progressivement élaborée au fil des vicissitudes de l'histoire coloniale, il convenait de faire de chacune des cases le symbole d'une des multiples entités territoriales et culturelles du pays kanak.⁴⁰

However, the means through which Togna and the ADCK team conceptualised the very possibility and legitimacy of giving effect to such a shift in register in the case of the

³⁷ This point is not discussed in particular detail by Bensa.

³⁸ Bensa (2000: 116); Bensa (2002: 196).

³⁹ Bensa (2000: 116); Bensa (2002: 196).

⁴⁰ Bensa (2000: 116); Bensa (2002: 196).

CCT was the pursuit of ‘*une démarche traditionnelle dans un contexte contemporain*’,⁴¹ in which Kanak groups representing the ‘*maîtres de la terre*’ were given a primary position and role.

The explanatory panel erected on the CCT site relating to the *Mwakaa* states that the three *cases* (South, North and Islands) within the *aire coutumière* are encircled by a unifying ‘*barrière du chefferie*’, formed by a low wall made of coral and wood typical of the Loyalty Islands.⁴² According to the CCT/ADCK guidebook to the CCT’s *aire coutumière*:

[d]ans *Mwakaa*, la responsabilité de la porte principale est confiée au gens des îles Loyauté. [...] Les gens de la Grande Terre reconnaissent ainsi les liens indissolubles qui les unissent aux gens des îles.⁴³

This ‘*porte principale*’ leads into the main central area which slopes upwards from the entrance and which has, according to the guidebook, been designed to function in the same manner as a ‘traditional’ *allée centrale*, at the far end of which is positioned the ‘*grande case du Sud*’.

The *cases* representing the ‘*gens du Nord*’ and the ‘*gens des Îles*’ have been constructed on either side of the *allée centrale* at a lower position relative to the ‘*grande case des gens du Sud*’. The particular prominence given to the ‘*grande case du Sud*’ within the overall symbolic framework of the *aire coutumière* is explained in the guidebook in the following terms:

[L]es trois *cases* du *Mwakaa*, symbolisent l’ensemble du pays kanak. Face à l’entrée, s’élèvent la grande case des gens du sud. Nous lui avons réservé une situation dominante pour signifier que les groupes qu’elle représente sont les maîtres traditionnels de ce lieu. En pénétrant dans l’espace coutumier, on doit d’abord se diriger vers la grande case des gens du sud.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Togna (1998: 18).

⁴² Kasarhérou and Klein (2000a: 46).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 24. See also *ibid.*, 42.

This key position and role in the structural organisation of the *Mwakaa* space can be seen to correspond to the similarly key position and role accorded to the '*maîtres de la terre*' in all aspects of the '*démarche traditionnelle*' adopted by the ADCK in the lead up to and during the CCT's inauguration, so as to found the legitimacy of the Centre from the perspective and by means of Kanak 'custom'.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Recall that an analogous, similarly key position and role was accorded by the Organising Committee of *Mélanésie 2000* to the '*maîtres de la terre*' in the structural organisation of the main-festival site and in 'customarily' welcoming and installing on that site the Kanak representatives from other regions and the Organising Committee itself, as discussed in Chapter One and Annex 2.

ANNEX 7

The ADCK's '*démarche traditionnelle dans un contexte contemporain*'

Togna identifies three key aspects of the '*démarche traditionnelle dans un contexte contemporain*' engaged by the ADCK in relation to the CCT.¹

Acquiring the permission of the '*maîtres de la terre*' to construct the CCT on the Tina Peninsula site

In the first instance, it was necessary to gain the permission of those identifiable as representing the '*maîtres de la terre*' to construct the Centre on the site.² As highlighted by Dussy (who draws extensively on interviews with Togna), this was complicated considerably by the highly complex and conflictual contemporary state of play persisting between various Kanak 'customary' actors (who, in several instances, are also elected politicians belonging to opposing political camps) in relation to the Noumea area.³ According to Dussy, Noumea constitutes '*le terrain le plus âprement disputé du territoire*',⁴ and in relation to which '*la revendication foncière joue le rôle d'une véritable "arme politique" qui permet aux protagonistes d'asseoir leur position.*'⁵ Moreover, Dussy maintains that faced with the materialisation of the CCT – '*une institution culturelle qui leur est propre*' – the Kanak actors involved '*se sont tous positionnés comme des acteurs coutumiers dans un jeu de pouvoir qui les oppose désormais les uns aux autres.*'⁶

It would appear from Dussy's account that, rather than risk the alienation of any particular group and embroiling the CCT in this local conflict,⁷ the ADCK (represented principally by Togna, who is himself personally embedded in the relevant 'customary'

¹ Togna (1998: 18).

² Ibid.

³ Dussy (2003). See also Dussy (1996); Dussy (2000).

⁴ Dussy (2003: 5).

⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷ Dussy maintains that the project at times provoked '*des réactions extrêmes, allant jusqu'à la menace d'une destruction du Centre culturel*', among the local Kanak 'protagonists': *ibid.*, 5.

relationships)⁸ worked to consult and implicate all of the major interested parties in these ‘customary’ processes. This approach is possibly reflected in the predominant designation of the ‘*maîtres de la terre*’ in CCT/ADCK publications by a range of broad and relatively vague expressions rather than anything more specific – for example, Togna characterises the ‘*maîtres de la terre*’ in *Mwà Vée* as the ‘*grandes chefferies du Sud*’, or simply, the ‘*gens du Sud*’.⁹ The problematic nature of identifying the ‘*maîtres de la terre*’ of the CCT site is not mentioned in *Mwà Vée* (or, indeed, in other relevant CCT/ADCK publications), despite this journal’s emphasis on the significance of the ‘customary’ processes engaged in relation to the CCT project and the Centre’s inauguration, and its detailed descriptions of these processes and ‘customary’ ceremonies, their meaning and importance.

Bensa similarly does not discuss the difficulties confronted by the ADCK in implicating the appropriate Kanak ‘customary’ representatives as the ‘*maîtres de la terre*’ of the CCT site. However, treating this category in the abstract (and so avoiding its necessary problematisation in this concrete context), Bensa also highlights the significance of the implication of the ‘*maîtres du sol*’ in relation to the CCT project as a means of founding the legitimacy of the Centre as a whole.¹⁰ Writing in general terms in relation to the significance of the CCT’s *aire coutumière* (rather than in terms of the significance of each of the *aire coutumière*’s specific elements), Bensa maintains that this area ‘*ancree les maîtres du sol sur le site et à ce titre peut être définie comme un lieu politique*

⁸ See *ibid.*, 5-17. Togna was also better placed to engage with the relevant ‘customary’ authorities and groups in comparison to Marie-Claude Tjibaou given the predominant persisting exclusion of Kanak women from this domain. According to Dussy, Togna’s personal position within the relevant Kanak socio-political structures and relationships was crucial to the ultimate realisation of the project: *ibid.*, 6.

⁹ Togna (1998: 18). It should be noted in this connection that the category of the ‘*maîtres de la terre*’ ‘traditionally’ attaches to specific Kanak ‘*clans*’, rather than to any larger groupings such as the ‘traditional’ ‘*chefferie*’. It might also be noted that, in the contemporary context, references to Kanak ‘*chefferies*’ (similar to, for example, references to Kanak ‘customary’ authorities) allows for some ambiguity and fluidity between the administrative ‘*chefferie*’ as a territorial and a socio-political reality created in French law during the colonial period, on the one hand, and the ethnographic concept and existence of socio-political territories defined according to Kanak ‘traditional’ or ‘customary’ socio-political, cultural and linguistic realities and practices, on the other. See Annex 1 for further discussion of the conflicting Kanak *revendications* of ‘customary’ authority over the Noumea area and the complex relationship of these *revendications* to the *clans* identified as actually representing the *maîtres de la terre* of the region – a complex relationship which might itself additionally or alternatively explain the vagueness of the ADCK’s identification of the ‘*maîtres de la terre*’ of the CCT site. See also Dussy (2003: 7-9).

¹⁰ Note that Bensa does not similarly detail or emphasise the other two aspects of the CCT’s inscription in the ‘*démarche traditionnelle*’ identified by Togna, both of which were particularly associated with the CCT’s inauguration and are discussed below.

essentiel',¹¹ one which, in the words of Togna, cited by Bensa, '*pose les conditions de possibilité de la construction du Centre, parce qu'elle marque sur le site l'autorité des clans maîtres du terrain*'.¹² Indeed, Bensa states that:

*[L]a logique de cette aire est celle de l'ordre social kanak tel qu'il existe avant et après sa mise en symbole par toutes les politiques culturelles le concernant. Plutôt que d'une « culture », l'aire coutumière relève d'une organisation essentielle du monde kanak, celle qui orchestre les rapports structurants à la terre.*¹³

Bensa draws on the 'traditional' relationship between the '*maîtres de la terre*' and the '*chef*' as a metaphor for the relationship between the CCT's *aire coutumière* and the Piano building.¹⁴ The '*maîtres du sol*' are identified by Bensa as the 'centre of gravity' of the socio-political order established in a particular place, having both welcomed more recent arrivals and chosen one among them to be the group's '*chef*'. According to Bensa, in this 'traditional' context,

*[t]out se passe comme si les maîtres du sol voulaient dédoubler leur mainmise sur le pays : contrôler rituellement son espace et confier à un étranger le soin de manifester son rayonnement.*¹⁵

Extending this logic to the constitution of the CCT, Bensa contends that:

*[s]ur le site de Tina, l'aire coutumière est aux maîtres de la terre ce que le Centre Tjibaou est à la chefferie. L'autorité des gardiens les plus anciens du lieu rend possible la réalisation du projet, qui, tel un chef, n'est qu'un tout nouveau venu sur les terres ancestrales. Aux uns, en bas et dans l'ombre, l'aire coutumière et le pouvoir éternel sur la terre ; aux autres, en haut et en pleine lumière, le Centre culturel et la gloire éphémère du règne sur les hommes : la dualité politique kanak sera respectée à condition que ces deux pôles soient bien établis par le plan-masse.*¹⁶

¹¹ Bensa (2000: 112); Bensa (2002: 194).

¹² Bensa (2000: 106); Bensa (2002: 191).

¹³ Bensa (2002: 192).

¹⁴ Bensa (2000: 108-109); Bensa (2002: 192-193).

¹⁵ Bensa (2000: 109); Bensa (2002: 193).

¹⁶ Bensa (2000: 109); Bensa (2002: 193).

Bensa concludes from this that the symbolic function of the *aire coutumière* as a whole is to render ‘*tangible l’extension des représentations politiques kanak au dispositif fondateur du Centre.*’¹⁷

While it is perhaps difficult to argue with this broad conclusion, Bensa’s analogy, likening the ‘traditional’ relationship between the ‘*maîtres du sol*’ and the ‘*chef*’ to that between the CCT’s *aire coutumière* and the Piano building, is not echoed in the discourse of the ADCK and its representatives. Rather, the key analogy mobilised by this latter group is that of the ‘customary’ process of conferring a name on a newborn Kanak infant.¹⁸

The ‘customary’ conferral of the name ‘Tjibaou’

The second key element of the ADCK’s ‘*démarche traditionnelle*’ identified by Togna was the ‘customary’ transferral of the Kanak name, Tjibaou, ‘owned’ by a particular group from Hienghène in the north of the *Grande Terre* (represented principally by the ‘*vieux Benoît Tjibaou, dit Boulet*’, from the ‘*chefferie Bwarhat*’)¹⁹ to the land on which the CCT was built in the south, via the Kanak ‘*maîtres du sol*’ of the site. This ‘customary’ process was finalised in a ceremony conducted on the CCT’s *aire coutumière* that formed a central component of the Centre’s official inauguration on 4 May 1998.²⁰ This particular process was formulated to respond to the entirely novel situation (from the perspective of ‘traditional’ Kanak practice) of attributing a Kanak name to a building (or rather, to the land on which the building was constructed, and so, by extension, to that building). As noted by Togna, this process was thus modelled on:

le schéma dans lequel on s’inscrit lorsque les oncles maternels viennent souffler la vie sur l’enfant. Le Centre culturel est le berceau dans lequel se trouve cet enfant culturel kanak. Le geste coutumier que nous allons

¹⁷ Bensa (2000: 109); Bensa (2002: 193).

¹⁸ See in particular the contributions by Jacques Boengkih, Béalo (Gony) Wedoye, Marie-Claude Tjibaou and Octave Togna in *Mwà Vée*, no. 20, April–May–June, 1998.

¹⁹ Del Rio (1998b).

²⁰ This ‘customary’ process and the inauguration are also discussed in Dussy (2003). On the 4 May a running commentary and explanations of the ‘customary’ ceremonies was provided via loud speaker for the benefit of the audience: Jacquotte Sampérez et al., ‘Une place pour la dimension spirituelle’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/1998, 26.

*accomplir à l'occasion de l'ouverture du Centre est basé sur cette approche d'un enfant qui naît. Quand les gens de Hienghène vont donner coutumièrement le nom de Tjibaou aux gens du Sud, ce sera comme ce souffle de la vie qui donnera véritablement naissance au Centre.*²¹

In this manner, Togna affirms that Kanak people and communities would become the major actors of (rather than simply being spectators at) the inauguration and the 'birth' of the Centre.²²

Moreover, this 'customary inauguration' was also designed to incorporate representatives from all of the *aires coutumières*, as a means of federating all Kanak people and communities in relation to the CCT. On the 3 May 1998 Kanak 'customary' representatives from the *aires coutumières* not directly involved in the Centre's 'customary inauguration' (through association with either the '*maîtres de la terre*' from the '*aire Drubéa-Kapone*' or the 'customary' 'owners' of the Kanak name Tjibaou from the '*aire Hoot Ma Waap*') were 'customarily' welcomed by representatives of the *aire Drubéa-Kapone* in a series of ceremonies held at the ADCK's Nouville premises.²³ Meanwhile, the '*vieux Boulet*' and representatives of the *aire Hoot Ma Waap* were 'customarily' welcomed to the south and housed during their stay in the *tribu* of La Conception, where a genealogical link or '*chemin coutumier*' could be established between the people of the north and the south of the *Grande Terre*.²⁴ For the 'customary' ceremonies on the 4 May in which the name Tjibaou was transferred, the representatives of the '*maîtres de la terre*' in the south were installed on the CCT's *aire coutumière* in front of the '*grande case du Sud*', with the representatives from the *aires* (other than *Hoot Ma Waap*) they had welcomed the previous day by their side. Those from *Hoot Ma Waap* arrived last, through the front, bottom entrance to the *aire coutumière*.

²¹ Togna (1998: 18).

²² Ibid.

²³ See Carole de Kermoisan, 'Premières cérémonies à la veille de l'inauguration du Centre culturel Tjibaou – Les aires coutumières rassemblées', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/05/1998, 8.

²⁴ See Dussy (2003: 15).

According to Jacques Boengkih (who was closely associated with the ADCK's organisation of the CCT's inauguration),²⁵ through the presence of the '*grandes chefferies*' from all of the Kanak *aires coutumières* at this 'customary inauguration',

*au-delà de l'acte sacré qui lie les détenteurs du nom et les autorités de la terre qui reçoit le nom, c'est désormais l'ensemble des aires coutumières qui reconnaît le Centre culturel Tjibaou.*²⁶

Togna, on the other hand, affirms that through this 'customary' ceremony '*les gens du Sud deviendront dépositaires du nom de Tjibaou au nom de tous les Kanak.*'²⁷ Indeed, in Togna's view, expressed in early 1998:

*[d]ébut mai, c'est un grand geste coutumier qui va s'accomplir, un geste qui va rassembler l'ensemble des clans kanak à leur culture. Un geste qui montrera qu'au-delà de nos spécificités, de nos différences, comme au sein de tout peuple, nous sommes capables d'être kanak ensemble.*²⁸

However, despite these statements published in *Mwà Vée* emphasising pan-Kanak unity and consensus in relation to the CCT project and the 'customary' processes engaged by the ADCK for its inauguration, Dussy's account of the lengthy period of negotiations relating to the 'customary' conferral of the name Tjibaou onto the place occupied by the Centre by the relevant Kanak individuals and groups in the north of the *Grande Terre*, culminating in the ceremonies of inauguration on the 4 May 1998, again suggests certain difficulties and conflicts within and between the different Kanak 'protagonists' involved.²⁹

The 'customary' conferral of the CCT to the ADCK

Finally, the last element in the 'customary' process, which took place at the end of the 4 May inauguration after dusk at the entrance to Piano's CCT building, saw the transferral by the '*gens du Sud*'³⁰ or the '*frères aînés du pays Djubea-Kapone*',³¹ representing the

²⁵ Wedoye (1998a: 17).

²⁶ Boengkih (1998: 8).

²⁷ Togna (1998: 19).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Dussy (2003: 9-17).

³⁰ Togna (1998: 19).

'*maîtres du sol*' but now also the Kanak people as a whole (via the preceding ceremonies with their 'customary' representatives), of the metaphorical 'keys'³² of the CCT to the ADCK team. This process was conceived as a means of according '*la légitimité à ceux qui sont chargés de faire fonctionner et vivre ce lieu*',³³ and of conferring on them the responsibility for the pursuit of the Centre's missions.³⁴

In keeping with the CCT/ADCK's attempted deconstruction and transcendence of the 'tradition'/'modernity' dichotomy, elements of 'traditional' 'cultural' and 'customary' expression were seamlessly interwoven during the CCT's inauguration with more contemporary (and often choreographed and 'staged') 'cultural' and 'customary' forms and performances, incorporating influences associated with the changing local context since the arrival of religious missionaries and French colonisation.

³¹ Boengkih (1998: 8).

³² Ibid., 9.

³³ Togna (1998: 19).

³⁴ Boengkih (1998: 8). These Kanak 'customary' representatives were positioned inside the Piano building's entrance to welcome the ADCK's representatives who arrived from the outside, via the *chemin kanak*.

ANNEX 8

Subsequent criticism in the local press coverage of the CCT

As acknowledged by Togna in an interview with Florence Klein only one year after the CCT's inauguration, local criticisms of the Centre have proliferated.¹ Togna is cited as exclaiming: '*[t]out le monde critique ! Le Centre est trop blanc pour les Kanak et trop kanak pour les Blancs.*'² The CCT has frequently been criticised for the posited resulting low numbers of Kanak and local non-Kanak visitors.³ In 1998, Brown questioned the potential 'social ramifications' of the difficulties of accessing the Centre by public transport and its entry fees in terms of Kanak marginalisation in relation to the CCT itself.⁴ Moreover, Brown identified 'the dilemma of the Centre and, beyond it, of Kanak culture' in general as being: '[f]or whose gaze is it (being) constructed?'⁵ This same problematic, and the resulting tensions within the Kanak community in relation to the CCT, have also been highlighted by Bensa, who asked:

*[c]omment en effet peut-on vivre sans tensions la rupture entre la continuité de sa vie sociale habituelle et la mise en spectacles aux yeux de tous de formes (sculptures, danses, livres, architectures) censées vous représenter ? [...] Les réactions kanak aux initiatives politiques relatives à leur culture rappellent cette difficulté à accepter facilement la disjonction entre l'être et le paraître, entre la vie pour soi et celle offerte aux regards des autres ; l'opposition prenant un tour d'autant plus fort qu'elle se développe ici dans un contexte de décolonisation.*⁶

¹ Klein (1999e: 337).

² Ibid.

³ See Message (2006a: 21). See also Dussy (2003: 17).

⁴ Brown (1998: 136). Note Marie-Claude Tjibaou's comments in relation to the question of entry fees: Marie-Cladue Tjibaou (2008: 18).

⁵ Brown (1998: 136).

⁶ Bensa (2002: 188). See also Bensa (2000: 10). This disjunction can be seen to have given rise to the view held by some Kanak people that the CCT should have been constructed '*en brousse*' for the direct benefit and use of Kanak people (the majority of whom do not live in the capital city), in keeping with a more material and functional conception of the political program of *rééquilibrage* within which the Centre's construction was initially inscribed. See Bensa (1992: 10). These issues are also highlighted by the analysis of Kanak *Radio Djido* journalist and pro-independence militant Nicole Waïa in 2008: '*[p]our les Kanak, le CCT, c'est un grand truc, alors que l'ADCK, c'est l'Agence de développement de la culture kanak, ce qui veut dire quelque chose. Le CCT n'est que l'outil de l'ADCK et pas l'inverse. Or c'est lui que l'on met systématiquement en avant par rapport à l'ADCK et l'on fait fi d'elle. Cela explique en*

A critical view was expressed by Togna in relation to the resulting reticence of many Kanak people in relation to the CCT in his 1999 interview with Klein. Togna maintained that:

[L]a société [Kanak] est malade parce qu'il y a des concepts nouveaux qui ne sont pas intégrés. Il faut du temps. Pour l'instant, les Kanak viennent peu au Centre parce qu'ils pensent – et c'est la faiblesse de leur réflexion – que la culture, ils la vivent tous les jours... mais plus ça va aller, plus ça va être difficile.⁷

Similar comments were made by Togna in an interview nine years later, suggesting the persistence of these issues.⁸

In 1999, Klein highlighted the (posited) '*dangers du coco vide*' in relation to the CCT, explained in the following terms:

[L]e défi de demain imposé à la culture kanak est celui du coco germé ou du coco vide, d'un beau centre culturel qui n'aurait pas de substance ou qui, au contraire, insufflerait sa propre impulsion à la société tout entière.⁹

Togna also affirmed at this time in relation to the predominant Kanak approach to visiting the CCT that '*[L]a démarche purement artistique n'existe pas encore.*'¹⁰ Instead, Togna maintained that '*les Kanak viennent dans un esprit de solidarité, par exemple, les gens de Hienghène viennent pour un artiste de Hienghène, mais ne restent pas pour celui de Maré.*'¹¹ This view is confirmed by Dussy's '*bilan*' of the CCT based on research conducted five years after its inauguration.¹² However, on Dussy's analysis:

partie le désintérêt des Kanak vis-à-vis du CCT et leur peu d'empressement à se l'approprier.' Waïa consequently suggests the need to disassociate the ADCK and the CCT in the future. Waïa (2008: 14). Togna also suggests that the ADCK and the CCT might best be separated in the future, with the ADCK focusing primarily on Kanak heritage and the CCT on contemporary Kanak artistic creation. Togna (2008a: 22).

⁷ Klein (1999e: 336). For a different account of some Kanak criticisms of the kind identified by Togna in this passage see also Message (2006a: 21-22).

⁸ Togna (2008a: 23-24). Note that Marie-Claude Tjibaou also highlighted these issues in 2008 in relation to the low Kanak visitation of the CCT, but articulated a less critical perspective in this regard: Marie-Claude Tjibaou (2008: 18).

⁹ Klein (1999a: 334).

¹⁰ Klein (1999e: 336).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Dussy (2003: 17-19).

*[L]e site du Centre culturel est devenu un nouveau lieu de sociabilité pour les Kanak dans la région de Nouméa, mais ce n'est pas le centre lui-même qui les attire, bien plutôt l'opportunité de se retrouver que représente ses abords. Les locaux eux-mêmes ne sont que très peu visités, les facilités du centre peu utilisées. C'est le statut de "lieu kanak" qui joue davantage que les différentes ressources artistiques ou de documentation proposées.*¹³

Thus, considerable tensions have been identified in relation to the attitudes and practices of Kanak people in relation to the CCT since its inauguration.

Dussy also posits the generally negative attitude of the non-Kanak population of Noumea in relation to the CCT and the resulting low visitation rates.¹⁴ In 2006, Message similarly wrote of the continuing local 'controversy about the representational responsibilities of the CCT', noting that 'some non-Kanaks resent the CCT as being designed "only for Kanaks", while others wish it represented a more multi-ethnic population'.¹⁵

While the local print-media coverage of the CCT, particularly in LNC, was largely positive and uncritical at the time of the Centre's inauguration, similar and additional criticisms to those discussed above can be seen to have become more prominent in subsequent years. Indeed, as early as July 1998 a more critical perspective in relation to the CCT was given voice in LNC. One front page featured a large colour image in which the photograph of a white woman with her fingers plugging her ears, taken from behind, was superimposed onto an aerial photograph of the CCT.¹⁶ The accompanying headline ran '*[L]es concerts du Centre Tjibaou gênent les riverains*', under which a passage of text explained further: '*[L]es habitants de Magenta, Ouémo et Tina se plaignent du volume sonore et de la durée des concerts durant le festival.*'¹⁷ At one corner of the principal image was positioned a smaller photograph depicting a Kanak

¹³ Ibid., 17.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Message (2006a: 21-22). Message cites in this connection Anne Pitoiset, 'What is the Tjibaou centre being used for? Disappointed hopes of the CCT', *L'EXPRESS.fr*, 10/10/2002, <<http://www.lexpress.fr>>.

¹⁶ 'Les concerts du Centre Tjibaou gênent les riverains', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/07/1998, 1.

¹⁷ Ibid.

man playing guitar and singing into a microphone.¹⁸ A whole page (excluding advertisements) of the paper was devoted to the accompanying article¹⁹ – more space than the majority of the newspaper's articles reporting on the concerts and performances held as part of the CCT's opening festival themselves. In this edition, Kanak culture (and, by extension, Kanak people) were implicitly represented as incompatible with Noumea's urban environment – even positioned at the city's outskirts, the CCT was represented as being too close for the comfort and peace of Noumea's (in the majority non-Kanak) residents.

In March 1999, LCB highlighted the low visitor numbers at the Centre, stating: '[o]n ne veut pas être mauvaise langue, mais il faut bien reconnaître qu'il y a plus de salariés au Centre culturel Tjibaou que de visiteurs.'²⁰ In February 2000, LNC asked Kasarhérou in an interview for his response to '*ceux qui dissent que le centre Tjibaou est une belle coquille vide et les autres qui prétendent que l'art kanak se limite à la case traditionnelle et aux flèches faîtières*.'²¹ In his response, Kasarhérou disagreed with these negative representations of the CCT and Kanak art, while acknowledging the financial difficulties often faced by artists and their consequently slow artistic development.²² On the other hand, LCB published a critical piece on the CCT in 2006 precisely in relation to its apparent failure to pay artists on time, concluding that: '*[a]vec ce genre d'histoires, le centre prouve une fois de plus qu'il est en sacré décalage avec les artistes*...'²³

The more critical approach of the local written press in its treatment of the CCT is also illustrated by LNC's coverage of the Centre's tenth anniversary in 2008. Particular

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Olivier Béligon, 'Des riverains excédés par la musique – Les concerts du Centre Tjibaou cassent les oreilles des riverains', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/07/1998, 5.

²⁰ 'Rares visiteurs au Centre', *Le Chien bleu*, no. 8, March 1999, 2.

²¹ Sandrine de Bonnefoy, 'Emmanuel Kasarhérou, directeur culturel du centre Tjibaou – « La curiosité, le goût du changement poussent les Kanaks à explorer toutes les facettes de l'art »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 07/02/2000, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

²² Ibid. Note that Kasarhérou also affirmed in this interview: '*[a]ujourd'hui, le centre est devenu une sorte d'icône de la Calédonie. Il apparaît pour notre territoire comme une image qui s'inscrira dans le temps. A nous d'être courageux, de proposer des choses originales pour gagner notre place de pôle culturel*.' Kasarhérou is also cited as inscribing the CCT within the broader positive development of '*la politique culturelle*' engaged in New Caledonia, through which '*la culture se rapproche des citoyens*', affirming that '*nous [the CCT] participons activement à ce mouvement*.'

²³ 'Le centre Tjibaou ne paye pas', *Le Chien bleu*, no. 96, July 2006, 1.

attention is given to the CCT by the newspaper on this occasion. The ADCK organised a rich program of events and exhibitions throughout the year, including two public open days at the Centre on the 3 and 4 May. In addition to a program of cultural performances and activities, these open days notably included ‘customary’ ceremonies held on the Centre’s *Mwakaa* associating both representatives of the eight Kanak *aires coutumières* as well as representatives of the country’s established non-Kanak communities.²⁴ To mark this occasion, eight carved *poteaux* representing the Kanak *aires coutumières* were planted around the entrance to the ‘*grande case du Sud*’ and plants chosen to represent the local non-Kanak communities²⁵ were planted by children from those communities within the *Mwakaa* area.²⁶ In light of the CCT’s predominant Kanak focus and representation, including in terms of the key participants in major events such as the Centre’s inauguration, this incorporation of local non-Kanak communities on the occasion of the CCT’s tenth anniversary has particular symbolic significance.

However, neither the symbolism of the eight *poteaux*, nor the symbolism of the plants incorporated into the CCT’s *Mwakaa* in 2008 is currently identified on the site. The symbolism of the plants is particularly obscure, given that they are in the majority species endemic to or commonly found in New Caledonia and that they have been planted in seemingly random and relatively peripheral locations.²⁷

In the period leading up to these open days marking the CCT’s anniversary, LNC reports that ‘[*Les huit aires coutumières seront représentées. L’idée est de rappeler « l’ancrage kanak » du centre*’], but goes on to affirm:

²⁴ Del Rio (2008).

²⁵ These communities are identified in *Mwà Vée* as: ‘*la communauté des pionniers (Calédoniens de souche européenne)*’, ‘*la communauté vietnamienne*’, ‘*la communauté japonaise*’, ‘*la communauté indonésienne*’, ‘*la communauté wallisienne et futunienne*’, ‘*la communauté polynésienne*’, ‘*la communauté vanuataise*’, ‘*la communauté des Antilles et de la Réunion*’ and ‘*la communauté chinoise*’. Del Rio (2008 : 3). They are identified in LNC’s coverage as: ‘*Calédoniens, Vietnamiens, Japonais, Indonésiens, Wallisiens, Tahitiens, Vanuatais, Afro-Créoles, Chinois*’. Patricia Calonne, ‘10 000 personnes au centre Tjibaou’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

²⁶ Del Rio (2008: 2). See also Veyret (2008).

²⁷ This complete lack of identification and explanatory information can, moreover, be contrasted to the extensive signage and explanatory details provided along the length of the Centre’s ‘*chemin kanak*’ in relation to the specific significations and uses of particular plants within Kanak culture.

[I]’ancrage oui, mais pas seulement. Car, comme le souligne Emmanuel Kasarhérou, « le désir d’être ancré dans son identité doit stimuler le désir d’aller au-delà, vers l’autre ». Une volonté d’ouverture qui, d’après le directeur de l’ADCK, rejoint complètement la pensée de Jean-Marie Tjibaou.²⁸

One illustration of this ‘volonté d’ouverture’ identified by the paper (following Kasarhérou) is the international concert to be held as part of the festivities. But the article also highlights that: ‘[I]’ADCK veut aussi « associer toutes les communautés de Calédonie au centre », notamment par un geste d’accueil qui s’adressera à tous, « Kanak et non-Kanak ».²⁹

The edition of LNC in print on the day of the commencement of the main celebrations marking the CCT’s tenth anniversary included another article citing Kasarhérou at length. However, in this article the newspaper emphasises the past and continuing ambivalence of local attitudes in relation to the Centre.³⁰ Echoing the headline – ‘Centre culturel Tjibaou : si proche, si loin...’ – the lead paragraph of this article thus affirms:

[v]oilà dix ans que les Nouméens et le centre culturel Tjibaou tentent de se séduire mutuellement. D’abord très frileux, leur rapport s’est ensuite réchauffé. Mais le chemin est encore long avant d’ancrer complètement le site dans le cœur des habitants.³¹

In this article, the paper posits that the CCT is appreciated more by tourists than by Noumean residents. Kasarhérou is cited as representing the CCT as having overall made considerable progress in relation to the general local public since its inauguration, but acknowledges that more needs to be done:

« [n]on seulement la forme architecturale pouvait dérouter, dans une ville où on ne connaît pas ça [...], mais il y avait aussi une interrogation majeure sur le projet culturel : À qui ça s’adresse ? Est-ce vraiment pour nous ? [...] » Et puis, un tournant : en 2000, une partie du festival des

²⁸ Jon Elizalde, ‘Ancrage et ouverture pour les 10 ans du centre Tjibaou’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 19/04/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Jon Elizalde, ‘Centre culturel Tjibaou : si proche, si loin...’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/05/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

³¹ Ibid.

arts du Pacifique se déroule au CCT. « C'est dans le regard de ceux qui venaient d'ailleurs que les gens d'ici ont compris que l'on avait quelque chose d'intéressant. » Et c'est surtout « depuis quatre ans » que « ça commence à monter », que des publics différents se sont constitués. Et aujourd'hui, « on a le sentiment qu'on a tourné une page [...]. Le centre fait partie du paysage culturel. »³²

On the other hand, Kasarhérou is also cited as highlighting that '[i]l y a une différence de rapport à la culture et à l'individu entre Océaniens et Européens', resulting in the general reluctance of Kanak people to visit the CCT other than in relation to specific community events (as similarly highlighted by Togna and Dussy).³³ Several Noumean residents of different ethno-cultural origins (both Kanak and non-Kanak) having different views in relation to the CCT are quoted directly in this article. On most occasions, these views are ambivalent or predominantly negative, indicating disinterest or dissatisfaction in relation to the Centre. Nevertheless, echoing Kasarhérou's perspective, the article ends on a positive note in relation to the future, implicitly linked to the changing politics of culture in the local context:

*[d]es aspects à améliorer donc, mais les choses vont déjà dans le bon sens. « Il y a un appétit nouveau des Calédoniens pour la culture, comme phénomène de partage et non de division. Ça, c'est nouveau ». Et plein d'espoir.*³⁴

This positive perspective and political inscription is echoed in another article published on the 5 May 2008 in relation to the CCT's open days. Highlighting the popular success of these celebrations, this article's lead paragraph affirms:

*[L]e destin commun est en route. Il a fait une escale au centre culturel Tjibaou vendredi et samedi pour célébrer l'anniversaire du centre et donner encore plus de poids à ces deux mots.*³⁵

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid. Note, however, that in an article published three days later Kasarhérou is cited as identifying this attitude as one held by 'les vieux' and not by 'les jeunes' of today: Patricia Calonne, '10 000 personnes au centre Tjibaou', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

³⁴ Jon Elizalde, 'Centre culturel Tjibaou : si proche, si loin...', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/05/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

³⁵ Patricia Calonne, '10 000 personnes au centre Tjibaou', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/05/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

The Noumea Accord concept of the '*destin commun*' is also mobilised by Marie-Claude Tjibaou in quotations reproduced in this article. The paper refers to the '*émotion évidente*' of the organisers and key invitees '*à voir autant de monde se croiser dans un même esprit de partage*'.³⁶ Marie-Claude Tjibaou is then cited as stating:

*[j]e suis touché que toutes les communautés aient répondu à notre invitation [...]. C'est une démarche qui s'inscrit dans le destin commun. Ce qui est important, c'est la rencontre entre les hommes, au-delà des discours. Mon rêve, c'est que ce que nous vivons pendant ces deux jours sur le site, nous le vivions aussi au dehors. Dans cette même symbiose. C'est le sens de ce que nous faisons ici, au centre. [...] C'est ce que prônait Jean-Marie Tjibaou. C'est ce pourquoi il se battait. Il faut faire le pas, aller les uns vers les autres. Aujourd'hui, c'est ce qu'il se passe.*³⁷

The newspaper goes on to highlight the '*moments forts*' of the celebrations, including notably the '*accueil*' of the '*différentes communautés du pays*' and the delegations of the eight *aires coutumières*, as well as '*la plantation d'un arbre symbolique par les communautés*' and '*l'installation de poteaux sculptés pour les aires coutumières*'.³⁸ The caption for an image of a crowd of spectators at the CCT accompanying this article states:

*[d]ix mille visiteurs sont venus participer aux deux jours de fête du centre Tjibaou. « On est là dans notre tradition d'accueil, a confié Marie-Claude Tjibaou. Il faut vraiment la rencontre des hommes. » C'est chose faite.*³⁹

In this article, the perspective articulated by CCT/ADCK representatives is echoed and affirmed by the newspaper. The figure of Jean-Marie Tjibaou is evoked explicitly and implicitly throughout the text. Links are drawn between Jean-Marie Tjibaou, the CCT, its *accueil* of the country's Kanak and non-Kanak communities during this event and the (socio-political) project and dynamic of the '*destin commun*'.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid. This article also includes quotations from Emmanuel Kasarhérou, which conclude with the affirmation that: '[c]es dix ans nous ont donné le temps de travailler sur la culture kanak mais aussi sur tout le reste, les autres communautés. On ne peut rien retrancher, ce serait suicidaire. C'est un encouragement à poursuivre dans l'écoute de l'autre. Surtout aujourd'hui.'

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

However, this very positive coverage of the CCT on the occasion of its ten-year anniversary, with its posited political significance and implications inscribed within the Noumea Accord context and dynamic, can be contrasted to the newspaper's coverage of the CCT and the ADCK published one month later in its '*dossier*' on the twentieth anniversary of the Matignon Accords, entitled '*20 ans d'accord*'.⁴⁰ The lead paragraph of the relevant article affirms:

*[L]a revendication identitaire d'un peuple dont la culture et le patrimoine ont été « niés ou pillés », selon les termes du préambule de l'accord de Nouméa, a été un puissant ferment de la quête indépendantiste. Vingt ans après, les outils de reconnaissance de cette identité sont là.*⁴¹

In this article, the newspaper identifies the ADCK and the CCT as being among these tools. Indeed, the CCT is identified as '*le symbole prestigieux, mais pas le seul, de la reconnaissance de l'identité kanak*', and as being '*au cœur des actions de valorisation de la culture kanak, qu'elle soit patrimoniale ou contemporaine.*'⁴²

LNC cites comments made by Togna in 2006 expressing his happiness at having been able through the CCT to encouraged exchanges, debate and discussion in New Caledonia, identified by him as the means of giving '*du sens à nos relations, à la décision prise de construire ensemble.*'⁴³ However, the paper goes on to state:

*[p]as si simple. Malgré sa prestigieuse beauté, le centre a mis du temps à s'implanter dans les esprits et dans les cœurs. Les Kanak n'y venaient guère, les Européens s'en méfiaient. Restaient les enfants des écoles et les touristes.*⁴⁴

LNC follows these observations with the same extended quotations from Kasarhérou published on the 2 May,⁴⁵ in which he affirms the progress made in this connection by

⁴⁰ 'La part faite à l'identité kanak', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 18/06/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Jon Elizalde, 'Centre culturel Tjibaou : si proche, si loin...', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/05/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>. See discussion above.

the Centre and concludes by highlighting the new appetite of locals for culture ‘*comme phenomena de partage et non de division.*’⁴⁶

However, in contrast to the optimistic conclusion drawn by the paper in echo of Kasarhérou’s comments in its earlier article, these citations are followed here by a final section under the subheading ‘[u]n contrepoin’, in which LNC effectively questions Kasarhérou’s conclusion. The newspaper maintains that:

*[d]e « l’autre côté », en contrepoin à l’affirmation forte de l’identité kanak, au centre Tjibaou comme au musée de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, s’est développée une revendication identitaire calédonienne. Au travers d’associations, de musées, les « victimes de l’histoire » se sont penchées sur le patrimoine du bagne ou des pionniers, leur patrimoine. Se pencher sur son passé, c’est préparer l’avenir. On se penche, c’est sûr ; mais chacun chez soi encore.*⁴⁷

Thus, while LNC draws a link between the country’s socio-political future and the nature of the contemporary engagement of local communities in relation to their cultural heritage and identity in the present, its assessment suggests that little progress has yet to be made in terms of the construction of a truly shared ‘common destiny’. As discussed in Chapter Three, these issues were also at the heart of the *Mwá Ká* initiative organised in 2003 and in subsequent years.

⁴⁶ ‘La part faite à l’identité kanak’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 18/06/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

⁴⁷ Ibid. The paper continues: ‘[c]e sera gagné quand les poucettes du bagne, les outils des pionniers ou les vestiges des Américains voisineront dans un même établissement avec des poteries Lapita ou des masques de deuil. Pareil pour la musique locale. Elle a explosé en vingt ans, avec des groupes toujours plus nombreux et mieux formés dans des structures décentralisées. Mais, là encore, les publics ne se mélangent guère. Ce sera gagné quand l’Anse-Vata viendra à la Rivière-Salée écouter du kaneka, et quand les jeunes Kanak iront sur la Nuit du rock. Quand le centre Tjibaou, jugé élitiste dans les quartiers populaires, accueillera aussi les groupes qui pour l’instant se produisent au Mouv’.’

ANNEX 9

Local press coverage of the eighth Festival of Pacific Arts

Twenty-four Pacific countries, represented by approximately 2 200 artists and performers, participated in the eighth Festival of Pacific Arts, held from the 23 October to the 3 November 2000 at a range of venues in Noumea and in a number of 'decentralised' locations in New Caledonia's the three Provinces.¹ The key Noumean venue, serving as a hub of events, displays and inter-cultural exchange, was the Festival Village, located in Anse-Vata (an affluent seaside suburb and tourist haven), although the CCT also notably hosted a number of events.² The Festival attracted large crowds, numbering an average of 10 000 per day at the Festival Village alone.³

In the context of New Caledonia's hosting a major regional event such as the Festival of Pacific Arts, the salience of the Noumea Accord as a discursive frame of reference in public discourse at this time was further heightened by the fact that the Noumea Accord itself provides for New Caledonia's increasing political and institutional insertion in and engagement with the Pacific region.⁴ Moreover, hosting this event at the turn of the century in this new political context was frequently constructed in the local written press coverage as a key step in the history of New Caledonia's institutional, political, cultural and social development, particularly in light of the cancellation of the fourth Festival of Pacific Arts in New Caledonia in 1984 by reason of the political and civil unrest which marked the beginning of '*les événements*' at that time (discussed in Annex

¹ 'Festival : Quand la parole est aux chiffres' (2000).

² Brown (2001: 34).

³ 'Festival : Quand la parole est aux chiffres' (2000).

⁴ This is illustrated by several statements made by Déwé Gorodey. In the lead up to the Festival, Gorodey is quoted by LNC in her capacity as one of the key organisers of the event as affirming: '[i]l y a une symbolique très forte dans ce festival [...]. Nous obtenons cette organisation en l'an 2000 et en pleine application de l'Accord qui donne la compétence de la Culture au Territoire.' 'Festival des arts du Pacifique – La délégation calédonienne en pleine constitution', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/09/2000, 5. In the wake of the Festival's conclusion, Gorodey is also quoted by Mwà Vée as stating: '[j]e pense, au même titre que tous ceux qui se sont investis dans l'organisation de ce festival, qu'il s'agit d'un événement très important pour nous tous, pour notre pays, les Kanak et les Calédoniens. Dans notre esprit, cette grande rencontre culturelle, ici revêtait une importance symbolique particulière en marquant notre entrée dans le troisième millénaire et notre présence dans le Pacifique puisque avec l'accord de Nouméa, nous nous inscrivons dans cette région.' Del Rio (2000a: 21-22). These statements clearly emphasise the congruence of hosting the Festival in New Caledonia with the application of specific provisions of the Noumea Accord.

4).⁵ In light of this history, hosting the Festival in New Caledonia in 2000 was portrayed locally as having particular symbolic importance.⁶

For example, Déwé Gorodey is cited in *Mwà Vée* as affirming in relation to the Festival in 2000:

*[i]l y a seize ans, nous n'avions pas pu l'organiser du fait que nos organisations politiques avaient opté pour le boycott des élections de 1984. Dans la foulée, le peuple kanak s'était investi dans ce mouvement historique de son histoire et de ce fait ne pouvait pas accueillir le festival. Aujourd'hui, nous Kanak, mais aussi l'ensemble des Calédoniens, sommes dans une autre étape importante de notre histoire avec l'accord de Nouméa. C'est un peu comme un retour de l'histoire seize ans plus tard.*⁷

In this passage, Gorodey constructs two distinct if overlapping histories, the first being that of the Kanak people and its movement towards independence, the second being that shared by Kanak and non-Kanak New Caledonians and marked by and defined in reference to the conclusion of the Noumea Accord. Holding the eighth Festival of Pacific Arts in New Caledonia in 2000 is constructed here as a way of marking the politico-institutional, cultural and social 'progress' made since the grave period of '*les événements*' in the 1980s, of completing previously unfinished business and of 'rectifying the memory of 1984', in the words of Brown.⁸

On the other hand, although anti-independence politicians can, overall, be seen from the press coverage of the Festival to have been broadly supportive of the event, they can also be seen to distance themselves from the Festival in various ways, or to minimise,

⁵ See, for example, S. de Bonnefoy, 'Il a lieu tous les quatre ans dans un pays de la région – Le 8^e Festival des arts du Pacifique à Nouméa du 23 octobre au 3 novembre', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 21/02/2000, 6; Luc Delannoy, 'Le comité organisateur local au travail – Tout sera prêt pour accueillir le Festival des arts du Pacifique', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/09/2000, 17; 'Festival des arts du Pacifique – La délégation calédonienne en pleine constitution', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/09/2000, 5; 'Jacques Lafleur, député de Nouvelle-Calédonie, « Faire connaître la culture calédonienne »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/10/2000, 10.

⁶ Note also that hosting this Festival in the year 2000 in New Caledonia was also frequently linked to *Mélanésie 2000* and to the engagement of Jean-Marie Tjibaou, particularly by its Kanak organisers. See, for example, Luc Delannoy, 'Le comité organisateur local au travail – Tout sera prêt pour accueillir le Festival des arts du Pacifique', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 2/09/2000, 17; Gorodey in del Rio (2000a: 21).

⁷ Del Rio (2000a: 22).

⁸ Brown (2001: 33).

contest or occlude its significance and the ‘nation-building’ overtones given (to varying degrees of transparency) to New Caledonia’s implication in the Festival by certain pro-independence politicians and the Festival’s Kanak organisers (including Gorodey). To take one notable example, in an interview published by LNH, prominent RPCR politician Pierre Frogier maintains that, in the New Caledonian context, the predominance of any one local ethnic group, identity and culture (as he views to be the case for Kanak people, identity and culture at this Festival of Pacific Arts) risks engendering further inter-ethnic social and political conflict.⁹ In line with this view, Frogier implicitly constructs the Festival (at least as it had purportedly been organised, without non-Kanak local representation) as constituting a potential threat to the Noumea Accord process and the Accord’s socio-political project of building a ‘common destiny’ inclusive of all members of New Caledonia’s population.¹⁰

Frogier particularly emphasises that the ‘*pluri-ethnique*’, ‘*pluri-culturelle*’ nature of New Caledonian society distinguishes it from its Pacific neighbours.¹¹ Frogier does not, however, mention the historical processes of colonisation which resulted in this local ethno-cultural diversity (and, indeed, the long period of subordination and denigration of Kanak people, society and culture), in contrast to the Noumea Accord’s Preamble itself.¹² By omitting any reference to this history and by affirming as necessary for present social harmony a strict equality between all of the different ethno-cultural groups now established in New Caledonia (which, moreover, Frogier represents as ‘aspiring’ to ‘*métissage culturel*’, through which all difference and differentiation is effectively ultimately eliminated), Frogier’s discourse can be seen to occlude and preclude the existence or legitimacy of any particular socio-cultural rights or a privileged position held by Kanak people, culture and identity as the country’s indigenous (and colonised) people, culture and identity. The position articulated by

⁹ Emmanuel Jeanjean, ‘Pierre Frogier, député-maire du Mont-Dore – « La recherche d’une identité commune »’, *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 658, 26/10-01/11/2000, 13.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² A similar discourse was also articulated by Jacques Lafleur in relation to the Festival. See ‘Jacques Lafleur, député de Nouvelle-Calédonie, « Faire connaître la culture calédonienne »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/10/2000, 10; ‘Jacques Lafleur, Member of the French Parliament for New Caledonia – “Make known the culture of New Caledonia”’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 28/10/2000, 13; Emmanuel Jeanjean, ‘JACQUES LAFLEUR AU VILLAGE DU FESTIVAL – « Des choses à découvrir »’, *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 659, 02-08/11/2000, 16.

Frogier (who is himself of local 'European' and Polynesian '*métis*' origin)¹³ in relation to the local politics of culture and identity is consistent with that advanced and engaged by the RPCR throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, and against which the CCT project was itself formulated.

Despite these criticisms and the predominantly indigenous orientation of the Festival of Pacific Arts and the Council of Pacific Arts,¹⁴ the discourse articulated by members of the local *Comité organisateur du Festival des Arts du Pacifique* (Cofap) in the lead up to the Festival's eighth edition in New Caledonia can itself be seen to stress the relevance of the Festival to all New Caledonians (not just to the Kanak population), as well as the need for everyone's active engagement in the event (including as members of the Territory's delegation of Festival participants) in light of the country's contemporary Noumea Accord context and that Accord's socio-political project.¹⁵ In an article published by LNC in July, Togna is cited as affirming: « [*l*]e festival des arts, c'est le festival de tout un pays, pas seulement des Kanaks [...]. Il faut que chacun s'investisse dans cet événement ».¹⁶ The Festival's organisers arranged for the composition and recording of a song for the event along with a promotional clip, with the expressed aim of engendering support for and involvement in the Festival within all of New Caledonia's ethno-cultural communities.¹⁷

¹³ Mokaddem (2002: 535).

¹⁴ Now named the Council of Pacific Arts and Culture.

¹⁵ See, for example, 'Octave Togna: « Le pays entier doit s'investir dans le Festival des arts du Pacifique »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 10/05/2000, 1; Charlotte Antoine, 'Octave Togna, directeur du comité organisateur: « Le Festival des arts du Pacifique est celui de l'avenir »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 10/05/2000, 6; Luc Delannoy, '200 participants y séjourneront pendant une semaine – La commune se prépare le Festival des arts du Pacifique', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/05/2000, 19; Luc Delannoy, 'Festival des arts du Pacifique – La décentralisation se prépare', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 21/07/2000, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

¹⁶ S. B., 'A 95 jours du Festival des arts du Pacifique – Une programmation à la fois traditionnelle et moderne', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/07/2000, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>. However, in this article LNC follows this quotation with the comment: '[u]ne phrase à méditer par les Nouméens habitués à fréquenter le site de l'ancienne CPS les jours de week-ends ensoleillés. A partir de mi-août, l'esplanade sera fermée pour permettre la construction des trente-deux cases qui composeront le village du festival.' In this instance, through the juxtaposition of this comment, which represents the Festival as an inconvenience to the local Noumean (implicitly here non-Kanak) population, with Togna's call for the involvement and engagement of all New Caledonians (Kanak and non-Kanak alike) in the Festival, LNC effectively subverts Togna's message, reconstructing it and the nature of non-Kanak involvement in the Festival in Noumea in a negative manner (as the passive tolerance of an inconvenience and disruption to everyday life, rather than as any more active participation or engagement in an event of direct relevance, significance and potential benefit or interest to them).

¹⁷ See S. de Bonnefoy, 'Festival des Arts du 23 octobre au 3 novembre – Un clip à la télé et un village à la CPS', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/08/2000, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>. Since the 1982

In July 2000, Togna is quoted by LNC as affirming that: '[l]a délégation calédonienne se doit de représenter tout le pays [...]'.¹⁸ No mention is made of the ethnic composition of the Territory's delegation in an article published at the beginning of September, entitled '*Festival des arts du Pacifique – La délégation calédonienne en pleine constitution*', in which Gorodey is quoted at length as the delegation's chief organiser.¹⁹ However, in an interview with LNC published shortly after the Festival, Gorodey is asked directly: '[c]ertains se sont étonnés de ne pas y retrouver toutes les ethnies représentatives de la Calédonie. Comment expliquez-vous cela ?'²⁰ In her response, Gorodey suggests that non-Kanak individuals were included in the New Caledonian Festival delegation, but that they had failed to participate in certain key Festival events (such as the opening ceremony) as planned, for an unknown reason.²¹ Gorodey concludes in this connection: '*je trouve cela dommage*'.²²

Moreover, in another interview after the event published by *Mwà Vée*, Gorodey clearly affirms the open and inclusive orientation of the Kanak (and, on her construction, pro-independence) organisers of the event. She identifies the Festival as having been:

une manière pour nous, militants indépendantistes qui avons signé cet accord [de Nouméa], de dire que nous voulons vivre avec ceux qui ont fait l'histoire de ce pays. J'insiste là-dessus parce que durant cette longue lutte d'une vingtaine d'années, on a toujours prétendu que les indépendantistes voulaient le départ de tous les non-Kanak. Là, nous avons affirmé au contraire, à travers un festival des peuples autochtones porté à la dimension du pays tout entier, que nous voulions réunir tous les gens de ce pays. Il ne s'agit pas de nous justifier mais de bien rappeler que nous avons signé les accords de Matignon puis celui de

meeting of the Council of Pacific Arts, each host country has been responsible for producing an 'anthem' for the relevant edition of the Festival (see South Pacific Commission (1982: 12, 15)), but in this instance the primary goal of the song produced can be distinguished for its particular local focus and attempt to represent, engage and unite all of New Caledonia's different ethno-cultural groups.

¹⁸ Luc Delannoy, 'Festival des arts du Pacifique – La décentralisation se prépare', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 21/07/2000, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

¹⁹ 'Festival des arts du Pacifique – La délégation calédonienne en pleine constitution', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/09/2000, 5.

²⁰ Brigitte Claudel, 'Déwé Gorodey (Membre FLNKS du gouvernement) – « Nous devons ouvrir les portes de l'Accord aux jeunes »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/11/2000, 10.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

*Nouméa dans cet esprit-là, d'émancipation et de libération nationale avec les autres. Nous avons fini par considérer que ceux, non-Kanak, qui sont de ce pays n'auraient pas d'autre endroit où aller si on les excluait et qu'il fallait bien prendre en compte cette réalité. [...] Alors nous allons vivre ensemble, dans d'autres rapports sociaux, et plus dans le rapport de colonisateur à colonisé.*²³

The pro-independence and nationalist political inscription of the event and its organisation in Gorodey's eyes is clear from this passage. Gorodey's construction of the politics engaged through this festival by its organisers can be seen to resonate strongly with the radical political project expressed through the *Mélanésie 2000* festival held 25 years earlier (and in relation to which Gorodey had been opposed at that time).²⁴

In an interview published just subsequent to the Festival by LNH, Togna, like Gorodey, expresses disappointment regarding the absence of non-Kanak representatives in the New Caledonian delegation.²⁵ LNH itself raises this issue, stating: '*[u]ne question se pose dans ce Festival des Arts, c'est la place de la Calédonie, sa représentation...*'.²⁶

Togna responds in the following manner:

[s]oyons clair ! La représentation kanak est clairement prédominante dans la délégation calédonienne. Je ne suis pas responsable de cette délégation, mais j'ai cherché – et je n'ai pas réussi – à faire en sorte que ce soit le pays tout entier qui reçoive le Festival. Pour le moment, cela repose surtout sur les kanak. Je me suis demandé si le fait que le Festival – ce rassemblement d'Océaniens – se déroule ici n'était pas un peu

²³ Del Rio (2000a: 22-23).

²⁴ Gorodey directly addresses this apparent change in her position in an interview with *Mwà Vée*. She explains and justifies her involvement in the organisation of the eighth Festival of Pacific Arts in the following terms: '*[j]'étais de ceux qui ont boycotté Mélanésie 2000. J'étais dans le « Groupe 1878 » à l'époque. Puis, en 1984, nous avons considéré que les questions politiques qui se posaient à ce moment-là primaient sur d'autres considérations et qu'il fallait les résoudre en priorité. Aujourd'hui, on a apporté des réponses à une partie des questions posées avec la rétrocession de certaines compétences d'État. Cette rétrocession irréversible des compétences fait partie de ce pour quoi nous avons lutté. Si aujourd'hui nous avons la responsabilité de l'art et de la culture, eh bien il nous faut l'exercer, cette responsabilité. C'était le sens de la demande du Comité d'organisation du Festival des arts du Pacifique en nous confiant la responsabilité de constituer la délégation de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et le sens de notre implication très forte dans ce festival*': *ibid.*, 21.

²⁵ Emmanuel Jeanjean, 'OCTAVE TOGNA, DIRECTEUR DU FESTIVAL – « Notre identité est devant nous... »', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 659, 02-08/11/2000, 18.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

*agressif pour les Calédoniens... La société calédonienne est malheureusement encore trop cloisonnée...*²⁷

Togna further emphasises this purported intention to involve the Territory's non-Kanak communities as participants in the Festival by constructing such participation as implied in the first part of the chosen theme for the event, '*Paroles d'hier, Paroles d'aujourd'hui, Paroles de demain*. Pacific cultures on the move together',²⁸ stating: '*[i]l est clair que la parole d'hier est gérée ici par les kanak, par les coutumiers. Pour la parole d'aujourd'hui, il me semble essentiel d'être tous ensemble.*'²⁹

As seen in the above passage, Togna represents the Festival as a missed opportunity, at least in terms of the local, New Caledonian context, having failed to bridge the gap between New Caledonia's different ethno-cultural communities by reason of the entrenched nature of that very gap itself. The idea also expressed by Togna that hosting the Festival of Pacific Arts, defined as a gathering of 'Oceanians', in New Caledonia could be perceived as threatening or aggressive by the local population of 'European' origin tends to suggest both that 'Calédoniens' do not perceive themselves to be 'Oceanian', in contrast to the local Kanak population, and the deep socio-political implication of these questions of culture and identity in the contemporary New Caledonian context.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Note in this connection that, while the official Festival theme was bilingual, it was most often reproduced in the local print-media in an abbreviated form comprising its French component alone. The reference to '*la parole*' in this part of the theme chosen by Cofap might alternatively be seen to emphasise the indigenous focus of the event. As explained by Brown: '[t]he use of the term *paroles* – that is, the spoken word – was an evocation of the oral tradition characteristic of Pacific island societies. As the bearer of cultural memory via genealogy and history, as well as of codes and laws regulating social conduct, *la parole* embodies all that goes to make up "ancestral wisdom".' Brown (2001: 33-34). This theme also clearly resonates with the guiding philosophy adopted by the ADCK in relation to the CCT project. On the other hand, it produced tensions with the representatives of some other Pacific countries involved in the Festival, for whom indigenous culture, identity and 'tradition' need above all else to be affirmed in the contemporary context primarily in reference to their posited 'authenticity', as defined by their continuity with the pre-colonial past and their differentiation from Western 'modernity': see Togna's comments in S. B., 'A 95 jours du Festival des arts du Pacifique – Une programmation à la fois traditionnelle et moderne', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/07/2000, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>; Emmanuel Jeanjean, 'OCTAVE TOGNA, DIRECTEUR DU FESTIVAL – « Notre identité est devant nous... »', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 659, 02-08/11/2000, 17. Thus, as stated by Brown, the Festival's chosen bilingual theme 'encapsulated a willingness both to belong to the "region" and to affirm difference.' Brown (2001: 33).

²⁹ Emmanuel Jeanjean, 'OCTAVE TOGNA, DIRECTEUR DU FESTIVAL – « Notre identité est devant nous... »', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 659, 02-08/11/2000, 18.

Togna firmly expresses the view that the delegation of New Caledonian participants sent to the Festival of Pacific Arts should now represent all parts of its present-day, 'multicultural' society.³⁰ Given that this was not achieved in the eighth Festival, Togna is critical of the resulting posited fact that:

*on n'a pas réussi à bien faire passer la réalité de la Calédonie, avec ses différentes communautés. Ils [the Festival's participants from other Pacific countries] ont vu la population européenne comme spectateur, mais pas comme acteur. Et c'est dommage ! L'aspect multiculturel de la Calédonie n'a pas été assez mis en valeur.*³¹

Togna's apparent advocacy of the Festival of Pacific Arts as a vehicle for the representation and valorisation of New Caledonia's '*aspect multiculturel*', and his emphasis on the importance of the active participation of the country's non-Kanak communities alongside the Kanak people in this cultural event, can be broadly contrasted to the public discourse he and other ADCK representatives articulated throughout the 1990s in relation to the CCT, despite its increasingly inclusive overtones (particularly in the context of its 1998 inauguration on the day before the signing of the Noumea Accord). This difference might be explained by reference to the predominant position already achieved at the time of the Festival by the Kanak cultural reference in New Caledonia, through the CCT itself and a number of the Noumea Accord's concrete provisions, a predominance also largely assured in the context of the Festival of Pacific Arts by reason of that event's inherent indigenous focus. It might also be seen to reflect the increasing discursive appropriation and integration of the Noumea Accord and its 'inclusive' categories such as local 'citizenship' by some local actors. On the other hand, this inclusive discourse articulated in 2000 might be contrasted to the persisting failure to actually realise such inclusion, raising questions concerning a possible disjuncture between the discourse and practice articulated and engaged by these actors.

Togna's negative representation of the perception of the 'European' population as passive Festival spectators can be contrasted to comments made by Lafleur and reproduced in the same edition of LNH.³² Lafleur unproblematically positions himself

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Emmanuel Jeanjean, 'JACQUES LAFLEUR AU VILLAGE DU FESTIVAL – « Des choses à découvrir »', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 659, 02-08/11/2000, 16. Note that the actual participation and

and fellow ‘*Calédoniens*’ in the role of Festival spectators, without raising any questions or criticisms in relation to the absence of New Caledonia’s non-Kanak communities amongst its delegation of active Festival participants (in contrast to Frogier).³³ Moreover, LNH reports that Lafleur

*a souligné la sérénité de la Calédonie, parce que, dit-il, « elle appartient à un très grand ensemble, et qu’elle a l’avantage d’être multiraciale et riche de toutes ses ethnies. Ce qui semble aujourd’hui important, c’est que chacun a envie de connaître la culture de l’autre ».*³⁴

There is no explanation as to why New Caledonia’s ethnic diversity represents an ‘advantage’. Lafleur consequently avoids engaging directly or explicitly with any specific discursive paradigm to valorise ethnic diversity as a positive attribute or organising principle for society (by reference to ‘multiculturalism’, for instance) which might be at odds or sit uneasily with the traditional French Republican paradigm or social model, according to which the valorisation and prioritisation of collective identities, affiliations and difference on the basis of culture, religion or race within the confines of the nation is largely conceived as discriminatory and exclusionary, and as posing a threat to social order, peace and harmony. Lafleur’s reference to the posited ‘*sérénité*’ of New Caledonia as the product of both the county’s belonging to ‘*un très grand ensemble*’ and its ‘*multiracial*’ character might be read as an affirmation of the (posited) positive and necessary character of New Caledonia’s continuing status as a part of the French Republic.

involvement of New Caledonia’s various ethno-cultural communities in different parts of the Festival, including involvement as ‘spectators’, appears overall to have remained consistent with (if not been determined by) the relevant preexisting/established social norms, cleavages and relative group positions and roles of those communities (or of particular groups within them) in relation to a Kanak or indigenous ‘Oceanic’ cultural event. For example, Peter Brown notes that: ‘even in this œcumenical cultural gathering – and the ubiquitous presence of tourists aside –, some New Caledonian social and historical divisions seemed “naturally” to be still reflected in the composition of the crowds attending the respective events and venues, from largely Melanesian (Place des Cocotiers in the City Centre) to largely Expatriate/Caldoche (gardens of the new Secretariat of the Pacific Community), although the makeshift “Village” produced a greater sense of community, *petits blancs* rubbing shoulders with Kanaks, in an ambiance of *kermesse*.’ Original emphasis, Brown (2001: 34). Brown also highlights in this connection the relative ‘isolation’ of the Tjibaou Cultural Centre as a Festival venue situated ‘on the outskirts’, both literally, of Noumea, and metaphorically, of Kanak identification and ownership: ‘[d]espite its name, the Centre Culturel Kanak continues to be largely perceived and patronised as a Cultural Centre for *les Blancs*’ (ibid., 34-35). However, aside from the relevant comments made by Lafleur and Togna, the situation observed by Brown is not made apparent in the local print-media coverage of the Festival.

³³ Emmanuel Jeanjean, ‘JACQUES LAFLEUR AU VILLAGE DU FESTIVAL – « Des choses à découvrir »’, *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 659, 02-08/11/2000, 16.

³⁴ Ibid. See also Lafleur’s similar comments cited in ‘Jacques Lafleur, député de Nouvelle-Calédonie, « Faire connaître la culture calédonienne »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/10/2000, 10.

Moreover, according to LNH's report, hosting the Festival of Pacific Arts is not only represented positively by Lafleur as advancing the awareness of Kanak culture and of the cultures of New Caledonia's Pacific neighbours, but as advancing the awareness and spread of French culture and the French language in the Pacific region.³⁵ This discursive inscription of the significance of the Festival of Pacific Arts in 2000, with its political implications, is very similar to Lafleur's discursive inscription of the significance of the CCT in his speech delivered during the Centres inauguration in 1998.

In LNC's coverage of the Festival, Lafleur is also quoted as affirming: '[q]ue la Calédonie soit pays d'accueil est une bonne chose.'³⁶ This phrase can be seen to have broader implications than those relating simply to New Caledonia's temporary role as the host country of the Festival of Pacific Arts. Representations of Kanak (and, more broadly, Oceanic) culture as being grounded on certain core principles of *accueil* has been an important discursive and rhetorical tool used by both pro- and anti-independence political 'camps' in order to assert, affirm, explain, justify and/or legitimise the (past, present and future) acceptance by Kanak people of subsequent, non-Kanak arrivals to the country. Indeed, in another article published by LNC in relation to the Festival, this same discursive mobilisation of *accueil* appears in relation to the large community of people from Wallis and Futuna who are now installed in New Caledonia.³⁷ The newspaper refers in this connection to New Caledonia as '*ce pays qui sait accueillir*'.³⁸ However, despite the mobilisation of such discourses of *accueil* in relation to New Caledonia's hosting of the Festival, it is significant to note that, whatever the intentions of the Festival's local organisers, the country's local immigrant Pacific Islander communities did not ultimately participate in the Festival as members of the New Caledonian delegation, but generally as members of the delegations from their countries of origin.

³⁵ Emmanuel Jeanjean, 'JACQUES LAFLEUR AU VILLAGE DU FESTIVAL – « Des choses à découvrir »', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 659, 02-08/11/2000, 16.

³⁶ 'Jacques Lafleur, député de Nouvelle-Calédonie, « Faire connaître la culture calédonienne »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/10/2000, 10.

³⁷ B L, 'Don symbolique d'amitié et de respect – La délégation de Wallis-et-Futuna offre sa pirogue au centre Tjibaou', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 06/11/2000, 12.

³⁸ Ibid.

Based on the local print-media coverage of the event, Lafleur and his RPCR collaborators did not mobilise the category of local 'citizenship' in their selective appropriation of the discourse of the Noumea Accord in relation to the Festival of Pacific Arts. In contrast, this category is frequently mobilised in 2000 in pro-independence political discourse and by the Kanak organisers of the Festival in relation to the significance of the event. For example, Gorodey bases her critique of the attitude of 'indifference' she attributes to the majority of local politicians in relation to the Festival on the Noumea Accord concept of 'citizenship', stating in an interview with LNC subsequent to the Festival that:

*[j]e n'ai pas vu beaucoup d'élus. L'accord de Nouméa implique une nouvelle citoyenneté. Il faut donc apprendre à sortir du discours purement politique. Ce festival était celui de tout le pays. Les culturels comme nous ont bien intégré cette notion.*³⁹

On another occasion just subsequent to the Festival, Gorodey can also be seen to represent the event's significance for New Caledonia in terms of the implications of the Noumea Accord's provisions and socio-political project for what might be described as New Caledonia's civil society. Gorodey contends that, in the Noumea Accord context, the Festival:

*a une signification politique importante. Pour nous Kanak, la démarche politique et la démarche culturelle sont liées. [...] Maintenant il est vrai qu'entre une signature au bas d'un accord et la réalité, il y a la marge que représentent les habitudes, parfois plus que centaines, difficiles à changer du jour au lendemain. C'est pour cette raison qu'il faut donner cette signification de geste fort à un tel événement afin de continuer à marquer notre volonté de changer les mentalités et les rapports entre les hommes, les femmes, les communautés de ce pays.*⁴⁰

This statement could be seen to express implicitly the need for the construction of a shared New Caledonian consciousness of the type potentially encapsulated by the Noumea Accord category of 'citizenship'. Gorodey constructs the Festival in this passage as potentially representing an important part of a broader process of social

³⁹ Brigitte Claudel, 'Déwé Gorodey (Membre FLNKS du gouvernement) – « Nous devons ouvrir les portes de l'Accord aux jeunes »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 08/11/2000, 10.

⁴⁰ Del Rio (2000a: 22).

change (and, from a pro-independence perspective, nation-building) engaged in, but not guaranteed automatically by, the Noumea Accord.

Togna is also cited in an interview in relation to the Festival as similarly affirming the need for the construction of a shared consciousness and experience of local 'citizenship'.⁴¹ In this interview, LNH asks Togna for his opinion on the 'vocation' attributed to another cultural initiative organised at the same time as the Festival in Frogier's Southern Province 'commune' of Mont-Dore, called 'Calédo-scope', which incorporated the participation of representatives from a range of the country's ethno-cultural communities. The paper represents the objective of 'Calédo-scope' as: '*réfléchir à la définition d'une identité calédonienne*'.⁴² Togna responds:

*[J]e suis d'accord pour la préparation d'une identité commune que j'appellerais l'assise de la citoyenneté. Mais moi, je tiens à cultiver les différences, car la différence est la richesse de ce pays. Ailleurs, on a essayé de gommer ces différences, et les revendications identitaires ont abouti à de violents conflits. Je ne crois pas à une identité culturelle commune. Je crois à un enrichissement culturel des communautés. C'est une complémentarité qu'il nous faut cultiver. [...] L'assise de la citoyenneté se fera lorsque chacun d'entre nous se sera approprié l'histoire de ce pays. Il nous faudra épouser l'ensemble des événements qui ont fait l'histoire de ce pays. [...] Il y a un travail de fond à mener pour établir une conscience collective d'appartenir à quelque chose, à un pays commun. Alors nous serons citoyens, le mot aura une âme...*⁴³

Togna here advocates the creation of a future '*identité commune*' defined in terms of Noumea Accord 'citizenship', rather than in terms of a common and unitary local 'cultural identity'. Particularly given Togna's emphasis on the need for all of the country's inhabitants to appropriate their 'common history' so as to found the common (political) identity constituted by local 'citizenship', Togna's perspective bears some striking similarities to that articulated by the organisers of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in 2003 and subsequently, discussed in Chapter Three.

⁴¹ Emmanuel Jeanjean, 'OCTAVE TOGNA, DIRECTEUR DU FESTIVAL – « Notre identité est devant nous... »', *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, no. 659, 02-08/11/2000, 18.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

ANNEX 10

Events organised to mark the 24 September 2003 anniversary

In addition to the *Comité 150 ans après's Mwâ Kâ* initiative, a number of different commemorative events were organised or patronised by local anti-independence politicians, including Jean Lèques, Harold Martin and Philippe Gomès, and a Kanak-focused event was organised in Pouébo, to mark the 24 September anniversary in 2003. As seen in Chapter Three, these events are significant for a consideration of the events organised around the *Mwâ Kâ* in subsequent years, particularly by reason of the changes in the local political context and their impact on the engagement of and positions adopted by various local politicians in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* in 2004 and 2005.

As discussed in Chapter Three, in 2003 the Mayor of Noumea, Jean Lèques, refused to give his official permission to allow the erection of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue in the *Place des Cocotiers*. He did not participate in or attend the *Mwâ Kâ* event organised at the *Baie de la Moselle* on the 24 September. Lèques did, however, officially launch an exhibition marking the 150th anniversary held at the *Musée de la Ville de Nouméa*.¹ According to LNC's report of this launch, Lèques stated that this exhibition:

*ne met pas l'accent sur la date du 24 septembre 1853, mais veut témoigner « d'une durée, de 150 ans de vie partagée entre les différentes communautés, avec ses heures de joie et de peine, de gloire et d'ombre. [...] Cette vie partagée, [...] c'est le ciment de l'identité calédonienne. Les pays qui sont riches de leur passé, et la Calédonie l'est, peuvent envisager l'avenir avec plus de sérénité, et c'est ce que nous souhaitons. »*²

These themes were also evoked by Lèques in the preface he authored for the exhibition catalogue.³ Lèques's seemingly inclusive discourse could be viewed as being belied by his position in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ*, particularly if one accepts the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative

¹ See Henri Lepot, '150 ans de mémoire collective calédonienne', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/10/2003, 2-3; '150 ans de mémoire collective : l'exposition inaugurée', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 03/10/2003, 9.

² '150 ans de mémoire collective : l'exposition inaugurée', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 03/10/2003, 9.

³ See Lèques (2003); 'Au catalogue : poèmes, histoire et témoignages', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/10/2003, 3.

as itself being similarly inclusive, in line with the discourse articulated by the *Comité 150 ans après*. On this view, '*l'identité calédonienne*' affirmed by Lèques actually represents an identity based on the exclusion of Kanak identity and people. On the other hand, in light of Lèques's affirmation of a united and unifying '*identité calédonienne*', his position in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* could be consistent with an understanding of the *Mwâ Kâ* as an exclusively Kanak symbol and initiative.

Three other events were also reported in the local written press as having taken place in locations outside of the capital city to mark the 24 September anniversary in 2003. In their capacities as the Mayors of Païta and La Foa, 'loyalist' politicians Harold Martin and Philippe Gomès each organised ceremonies in their respective *communes*. Both had, in fact, reintroduced such commemorative ceremonies on this date since 1995, and had thereby '*remis au gout du jour « Français » la commémoration du 24 septembre*',⁴ according to LI. In one of the articles published by LI on these commemorations, the paper highlights the political significance of and context within which these two ceremonies took place in 2003, contending in the lead paragraph of this article that:

*[L]es maires de La Foa et de Païta ont profité de la commémoration du 24 septembre pour singulièrement se démarquer d'un RPCR qui a eu bien du mal à accepter un poteau à Nouméa et qui parle d'une fête nationale le 26 juin. Drôle de choix dans la date...*⁵

Indeed, LI contrasts the (purportedly) 'consensual attitudes and initiatives' of Martin and Gomès with an RPCR struggling to take on and accept ('*assumer*') the Noumea Accord.⁶

In an earlier article on this subject, LI maintains that, in the context of the Matignon Accords, followed and reinforced by the Noumea Accord, Martin and Gomès '*ont voulu redonner un sens patriotique à cette prise de possession*', their '*détermination*' having been reinforced by '*[l]a reconnaissance des deux légitimités, kanak et Européenne*'.⁷ Despite this specification by LI in relation to the nature of these 'two legitimacies' as

⁴ Thierry Squillario, 'Un lieu de mémoire à Païta', *Les Infos*, no. 53, 26/09/2003, 2.

⁵ Thierry Squillario, 'Gomès et Martin prennent date', *Les Infos*, no. 54, 03/10/2003, 2. It should be stressed that the phrase '*fête nationale*' does not appear to have been used directly by any RPCR politicians in relation to this proposition to commemorate the 26 June.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Thierry Squillario, 'Un lieu de mémoire à Païta', *Les Infos*, no. 53, 26/09/2003, 2.

Kanak and 'European', Harold Martin is quoted in LNC as having constructed the 'two legitimacies' recognised by the Noumea Accord in somewhat broader terms.⁸ Martin is thus cited as having affirmed his desire to see the 24 September become a day to celebrate:

*l'histoire commune et [...] l'avènement du destin commun des deux légitimités qui peuplent la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Les Mélanésiens et tous ceux qui sont arrivés après la prise de possession : les Européens, les Vietnamiens, les Indonésiens, les Tahitiens, les Wallisiens et les Futuniens...*⁹

LI directly cites a different passage from Martin's speech which, like the article published by LNC in relation to the exhibition held at the *Musée de la Ville de Nouméa* discussed above, can be seen to distinguish between the *Mwâ Kâ* event and his own event in Païta, and to associate them respectively with one of the two recognised local 'legitimacies' or groups, although both events are represented by Martin as being essentially equally valid and 'legitimate'.¹⁰ Martin is thus quoted as having affirmed:

*[a]ujourd'hui, il est clair que ces deux légitimités ont leur place, [...] c'est pour cette raison que nous célébrons à nouveau cet anniversaire depuis 1995. L'idée du comité 150 ans après de planter un poteau à Nouméa, dans la capitale, c'est également un vrai symbole de l'histoire. Ces deux démarches sont parfaitement légitimes.*¹¹

Martin is also reported in both newspapers as having proposed the creation of a new, inclusive commemorative site in the town of Païta, characterised by LI as a '*lieu de mémoire*'.¹² According to LNC, it was planned that this new site would incorporate '*des monuments symboliques de chaque communauté*', '*pour que toutes les communautés se*

⁸ Jérôme Gavelle, 'Harold Martin : « Un lieu pour célébrer ensemble le 24 septembre », *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 5.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Thierry Squillario, 'Un lieu de mémoire à Païta', *Les Infos*, no. 53, 26/09/2003, 2.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.; Jérôme Gavelle, 'Harold Martin : « Un lieu pour célébrer ensemble le 24 septembre », *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 5.

retrouvent afin de célébrer ensemble le 24 septembre qui doit marquer l'avènement du « Destin commun ». ¹³

The commemorative event organised in the *commune* of La Foa was also covered by both of these newspapers. The speech made by Gomès during the ceremony he officiated in the main public square of the town of La Foa (the *Place Georges Guillermet*) was reproduced in its entirety by LI. ¹⁴ In this speech Gomès characterised the ceremony as marking the '*150e anniversaire du rattachement de la Nouvelle Calédonie à la France*'. ¹⁵ According to LNC's report, several other local personalities and '*responsables coutumiers*' also participated in this event. ¹⁶ To mark the anniversary two new commemorative plaques were officially unveiled on the '*monument au Pionniers*', which had itself been erected in the square in 1953 to mark the 100th anniversary of the country's '*rattachement*' to France. As noted by Gomès in his speech, the original plaque on this monument reads: '*à la mémoire des pionniers de La Foa et des communes environnantes*'. ¹⁷ The texts engraved on both of the new plaques similarly make no express mention of the local Kanak population, the history and particular position of which are not foregrounded in any manner in these texts. The first plaque is engraved with, in Gomès's words, '*la déclaration historique de l'amiral Febvrier Despointes*' made on the 24 September to effect the '*prise de possession*'. ¹⁸ The second plaque is engraved with the following two extracts from the Noumea Accord's Preamble:

[L]e moment est venu de reconnaître les ombres de la période coloniale, même si elle ne fut pas dépourvue de lumière. (...) Les communautés qui vivent sur le Territoire ont acquis par leur participation à l'édification de la Nouvelle-Calédonie une légitimité à y vivre et à continuer de contribuer à son développement (...) ¹⁹

¹³ Jérôme Gavelle, 'Harold Martin : « Un lieu pour célébrer ensemble le 24 septembre », *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 5.

¹⁴ '« Vouloir vivre ensemble », *Les Infos*, no. 54, 03/10/2003, 2.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ 'La Foa – Un 24 septembre porteur d'espoirs', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 29.

¹⁷ '« Vouloir vivre ensemble », *Les Infos*, no. 54, 03/10/2003, 2.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Taken from the photo of the plaques by David Monnier reproduced by *Les Infos*, no. 54, 03/10/2003, 2.

Nevertheless, Gomès's speech itself did expressly include an account of both the Kanak and the non-Kanak experiences of the country's colonisation.²⁰ Indeed, Gomès's speech can be seen to largely mirror the historical narrative and echo the majority of the conclusions articulated in the Noumea Accord's Preamble, to which he makes frequent reference.²¹ Moreover, like the position articulated by Martin, Gomès's speech placed particular emphasis on the 'two legitimacies' recognised in the Noumea Accord.²² Gomès also affirmed that the 'conjugation' of these two legitimacies into (in the terms of the Accord) '*une communauté humaine affirmant son destin commun*' now represents '[t]out l'enjeu' of the Noumea Accord.²³ Gomès also identified this '*trajectoire commune*' as being: '*celle d'un peuple en devenir*'.²⁴ Furthermore, he maintained that the Noumea Accord's

*volontarisme politique ne peut véritablement s'inscrire dans les faits que si chacun assume sa part d'histoire, et sa part d'héritage dans cette histoire. Que chacun l'assume sans pour autant l'oublier, mais sans non plus la porter systématiquement en bandoulière. Que chaque quête identitaire, légitime et nécessaire, ne se traduise pas par un repli identitaire.*²⁵

Gomès thus concluded his speech in reference to the new commemorative plaques as follows:

*[J]'espère que ces textes inscriront ce monument des Pionniers dans le temps de l'Accord de Nouméa, celui d'une Nouvelle-Calédonie rassemblée, ouverte sur le monde et sur les autres, assumant collectivement son histoire.*²⁶

As seen in Chapter Three, Gomès's speech written for the 24 September event organised the following year at the then still unfinished *Place du Mwâ Kâ* (but delivered at this 2004 event on his behalf by Christiane Gambey) articulates many of the same themes and a very similar perspective, but infused with much of the discourse

²⁰ '« Vouloir vivre ensemble »', *Les Infos*, no. 54, 03/10/2003, 2.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

articulated by the *Comité 150 ans après* itself in relation to the symbolism of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and initiative.

Finally, another commemorative event, including a series of ‘customary’ ceremonies, was organised on the 24 September 2003 in the Northern Province *commune* of Pouébo. This *commune* includes the sites at which: the English and French explorers first landed in the New Caledonian archipelago and made first contact with the local indigenous people; the first permanent missions were established; and the ‘*Contre-Amiral*’ Febvrier-Despointes officially ‘took possession’ of New Caledonia in the name of France on the 24 September 1853. As discussed in Chapter Three, LNC’s coverage of this commemorative event in Pouébo emphasises that it was organised ‘*en parallèle*’ and in the same spirit as the *Mwâ Kâ* event in Noumea.²⁷

²⁷ ‘Pouébo – 24 septembre : journée de recueillement et d’échanges’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2003, 24; SJ, ‘Pouébo – 24 Septembre : rassemblés par l’histoire’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2003, 30.

ANNEX 11

Origins of the *Mwâ Kâ* project

The *Sénat coutumier* and the CNDPA: indigenous rights and representation

As indicated in Chapter Three, the *Comité 150 ans après* was created on the 12 June 2003 under the aegis of the *Sénat coutumier* and the CNDPA. The *Sénat coutumier* was created and instituted in 1999 pursuant to the Noumea Accord as the successor to the Matingon Accords' *Conseil consultatif coutumier du territoire*. Thus, the *Sénat coutumier* and the eight regional *Conseils coutumiers* are the means through which Kanak 'customary' representation is formally incorporated into the current local politico-institutional structure.¹ According to Mathias Chauchat in 2009, ten years after its creation, the *Sénat coutumier* can be identified as oscillating politically between 'deux dimensions': the representation of 'la coutume', or 'le monde coutumier', and the representation of 'le peuple Kanak'.² However, these dimensions generally appear to be conflated in the discursive representation of the institution's character and functions by its members. In this perspective, the representation of 'la coutume' (effected through pre-existing authorities claiming 'customary' legitimacy) is posited as an (if not the most) effective and legitimate political means providing for the representation of the Kanak people as a whole.

Like the *Conseil consultatif coutumier du territoire* before it, the *Sénat coutumier* is closely connected to the CNDPA, which was created in 1995 to succeed the *Association pour la commémoration de l'année des peuples indigènes en Kanaky* (ACAPIK), formed in 1993. A number of the members of the ACAPIK and the CNDPA have also been officially associated with or members of the *Conseil consultatif coutumier du territoire* and the *Sénat coutumier*.

There is also a substantial overlap in the primary concerns of these bodies. The CNDPA aims and purports to represent the interests of the Kanak people as a whole, and so operates in the same pan-Kanak register as the *Sénat* (and its predecessor). Both bodies

¹ The creation, nature and functions of the *Sénat coutumier* and the *Conseils coutumiers* are discussed in Annex 1.

² Chauchat (2009).

are concerned with the indigenous rights of the Kanak people. Thus, as clearly indicated by its name, the CNDPA is primarily concerned with the rights of the Kanak people stemming specifically from their status as the country's indigenous people. The incorporation of Kanak 'customary' representation into the local politico-institutional structure can similarly be identified as a means of recognising and potentially giving effect to some of the Kanak people's indigenous rights. The terms of the Noumea Accord itself render explicit this link between the Kanak people's indigenous status and the institutional incorporation of such Kanak 'customary' representation. The Accord's Preamble not only recognises the '*peuple Kanak*' as the '*peuple d'origine*' (also referred to as the '*population autochtone*') of the country, but aims to '*restituer au peuple kanak son identité confisquée*'³ in the course of colonisation, through the institution of various concrete measures including the creation of the *Sénat coutumier* itself as a means of incorporating '[les] *structures coutumières dans les institutions*'.⁴ As discussed in the Introduction, the recognition and restitution of Kanak identity through these measures is constructed in the Noumea Accord's Preamble as equating, from the perspective of the Kanak people, to '*une reconnaissance de sa souveraineté*', and as being a necessary precondition of '*la fondation d'une nouvelle souveraineté, partagée dans un destin commun*'.⁵

Celebrating the 'International Year of the World's Indigenous People' on the 24 September 1993 in Kanaky/New Caledonia

From 1993 to 2002, the CNDPA and its predecessor, the ACAPIK, organised commemorations focused on the Kanak people as the country's indigenous people to

³ *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*, 'Préambule', point 3.

⁴ Ibid., 'Préambule', point 5. Recall that the contemporary affirmation of 'indigenous rights' is necessarily based on historical claims of territorial antecedence and a certain degree of continuity with the past. In the case of New Caledonia, the very legitimacy of Kanak 'customary' representation (and, by extension, of its formal institutional incorporation) is by definition based on the posited maintenance of a certain minimum threshold level of continuity between 'custom' and/or its representatives in the pre-colonial past and in the present. Some of the criticisms of the *Sénat coutumier* in this connection are discussed in Annex 1.

⁵ *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*, 'Préambule', point 3. See the discussion on this and the related ambiguities and tensions in the Introduction.

mark the 24 September each year.⁶ As indicated by the ACAPIK's name, this association was originally created as a means of engaging locally with (and strategically capitalising on) 1993 as the 'International Year of the World's Indigenous People', proclaimed by the UN General Assembly.⁷ In that same year, the UN General Assembly also proclaimed the 'International Decade of the World's Indigenous People', beginning on the 10 December 1994 and aiming to 'strengthen international cooperation for solving problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as human rights, the environment, development, education and health.'⁸ In addition, the UN General Assembly decided that the 9 August should be observed each year throughout this Decade as the 'International Day of the World's Indigenous People', being the date on which the first meeting of the 'UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights' was held in 1982.⁹ In 2004, the General Assembly prolonged the focus on indigenous issues by proclaiming the 'Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples'.¹⁰

The choice of celebrating the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples in 1993 on the 24 September in the New Caledonian context clearly renders salient the link between the '*fait colonial*' and the contemporary *revendications* of the Kanak people in relation to their rights as the country's indigenous people, rights which include but go beyond that of self-determination. The symbolic significance of the 24 September anniversary, which appears to have been officially proclaimed the '*Fête de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*' (to be celebrated instead of the then '*jour de la Fête de l'Empereur*') in 1870,¹¹ has been the source of considerable local contention and

⁶ Xavier Serre, 'Lucienne Moréo-cee, comité 150 ans après : « Un poteau pour enterrer les différences »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 2; HENRI LEPOT, 'Heurs et malheurs d'un jour ambigu', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2003, 4; Demmer (2007: 48).

⁷ 'Le Conseil National pour les Droits du Peuple Autochtone de Nouvelle-Calédonie' (1997: 87). See also UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 'International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples: History', 2008, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/news_internationalday2008.html>. On Christine Demmer's account, the ACAPIK was created by the FLNKS, a contention potentially supported by the reference to 'Kanak' in the Association's name. Demmer (2007: 48).

⁸ UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 'International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples: History', 2008, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/news_internationalday2008.html>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Association pour la fondation d'un institut Kanak d'histoire moderne (1984: 19); Le Comité 150 ans après (2003 : 25).

conflict in the public domain since the emergence of the first radical anti-colonial Kanak groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

According to David Chappell, the *Foulards Rouges* had regarded the 24 September as a 'day of national mourning' since 1973.¹² In 1974, the *Foulards Rouges* and the newly formed *Groupe 1878* held a protest rally during the traditional official military parade along *Anse Vata* marking the 24 September, brandishing banners with slogans such as '*Nos Terres !*', '*24 septembre – Deuil kanak*', and calling for independence. The protest was repressed by the police and several individuals were arrested, which led to further peaceful protests that were violently repressed by the police.¹³ The UC and the FI would officially treat the 24 September as a day of Kanak mourning from 1979. When, in the early 1980s, the FI fixed dates for the country's accession to independence ('*TOP82*' followed by '*TOP84*'), the 24 September was the date selected, with the clear intention of inverting its original symbolic significance as the beginning of French colonial domination over the Kanak people and their country. The foundational congress of the FLNKS was held from the 22 to the 24 September 1984.

The local commemorations and/or celebrations held to mark the 24 September anniversary have consequently had a chequered history since the 1970s and the emergence of the Kanak independence movement.¹⁴ Moreover, just as the question of New Caledonia's political future and its relationship to France still remains highly contentious and divisive in New Caledonia to this day, so too, the symbolic significance of the 24 September anniversary remains highly polemical and contested.

It appears that no major public events were organised specifically to mark the 24 September in the years immediately preceding 1993, precisely because of the

¹² Chappell (2003a: 198). This 'spirit of mourning' has also been identified by Mark McKenna as: 'an important feature in the politics of Aboriginal resistance in twentieth century Australia, most notably at times of national celebration for White Australians.' For example, McKenna notes that, '[a]t the sesquicentenary celebrations in 1938, members of the Aboriginal Progressive Association wore formal black dress when they met at Sydney Town Hall on January 26 to declare Australia Day a day of mourning.' Footnote omitted, McKenna (1998: 71).

¹³ See Gabriel and Kermel (1985: 104); 'Chronologie des années 1974 – 1975 – 1976' (1995: 58); Chappell (2003a: 198-199).

¹⁴ This date has also been marked by number of significant events during this period, such as the burial in 1981 of the UC's Secretary-General, Pierre Declercq, identified at the time by pro-independence militants as the '*premier martyr blanc pour l'indépendance kanake socialiste*': 'LE CORTEGE MORTUAIRE DE MERCREDI', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/1981, 4.

anniversary's polemical character and the particular socio-political context prevailing at the time. 1993 provided a unique conjuncture, being not only the 140th anniversary of the '*prise de possession*' and the half-way point of the Matignon Accords, but also the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples. The ACAPIK organised a series of events in different locations around the country culminating in a '*fête des peuples indigènes*' held on the weekend of the 24 September in Poindimié. As discussed in Chapter Two, Paul Néaoutyine presided over the event.¹⁵ Up to 10 000 spectators were reported as having attended,¹⁶ and the event gathered not only Kanak delegations and 'customary' and elected representatives from throughout New Caledonia, but also representatives of indigenous peoples from Canada, Australia and French Polynesia, political representatives from Papua New Guinea, Fidji, Vanuatu, Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia, the French High Commissioner to New Caledonia, as well as representatives of the local settler and immigrant Oceanic, Asiatic and European communities.¹⁷

In his opening address, Néaoutyine appears to have constructed the significance of this 1993 event in relation to the history of the Kanak people subsequent to the advent of colonisation. In his speech he thus traced some of the '*grandes étapes*' of the '*longue marche*' of the Kanak people since 1853, a 'march' which he identifies as still continuing and which, from the FLNKS perspective, is posited as ultimately leading to independence. Moreover, Néaoutyine is quoted by TDC as having affirmed in his address that:

[L]e passé doit être à l'esprit comme témoin d'erreurs qu'il ne faut pas refaire, d'acquis qu'il faut conforter. Le passé doit aider le présent et servir l'avenir, parce que les choses ont grandement évolué dans notre pays et dans le monde. Qui pouvait penser en effet que le peuple kanak pourrait un jour, comme ce fut le cas pendant cette semaine, accueillir de son propre chef, à son invitation et sur son sol, des représentants d'autres peuples, des représentants d'Etats indépendants, le représentant

¹⁵ See 'Poindimié a fêté l'année des peuples indigènes', *Tour de côte*, no. 34, November 1993, 6-7; Paul Néaoutyine : "Sous le signe du renouveau et du partage", *Tour de côte*, no. 34, November 1993, 8-11.

¹⁶ 'Poindimié a fêté l'année des peuples indigènes', *Tour de côte*, no. 34, November 1993, 6.

¹⁷ 'Paul Néaoutyine : "Sous le signe du renouveau et du partage"', *Tour de côte*, no. 34, November 1993, 8.

*de la France. En exerçant notre droit d'accueil dans nos huit aires, en montrant à tous nos hôtes quelques aspects de ce que nous sommes encore, je crois pouvoir dire que notre peuple relève la tête et que tout est permis pour le futur.*¹⁸

Néaoutyine can be seen in this passage to construct the socio-political significance of the event in terms of the restitution and exercise of the Kanak people's '*droit d'accueil*' in its own lands. This *droit d'accueil* is clearly linked to the status of the Kanak people as the first occupants or indigenous people of the country, and it is implicitly linked to conceptions of sovereignty.

In 1993, Paul Néaoutyine was also particularly careful to stress in his opening public address that the '*chemin*' to the full recognition and restitution of the rights of the Kanak people as the indigenous people (leading ultimately, in his view, to the country's accession to independence), '*est encore long et semé d'embûches*'.¹⁹ Néaoutyine emphasised the responsibility of the Kanak people as the primary and legitimate actors in deciding the country's future and ensuring the recognition, protection and valorisation of the Kanak people's '*spécificités*' in(to) that future.²⁰ The 1993 event is identified in Néaoutyine's discourse as a demonstration of the fact that the Kanak people is now in the process of 'raising its head'.²¹ This particular construction can be seen to resonate with Tjibaou's conclusion in the 1976 preface to *Kanaké : Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie*, in which he affirms that '[*Kanaké*] réclame sa part de soleil'.²² The name of the political movement led by Tjibaou when he first ran for Mayor of Hienghène in 1977 was '*Maxha !*', or '*Relever la tête !*'²³ In 1993, this imperative exhortation is represented by Néaoutyine as finally in the process of being achieved.

¹⁸ Ibid., 10.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 11.

²¹ Ibid., 10.

²² Tjibaou (1978).

²³ Editorial passage in Tjibaou (1996: 61).

The CNDPA prior to the Noumea Accord

According to an article published in the official journal of the *Conseil consultatif coutumier du territoire* in 1997, the decision to create the CNDPA as the ACAPIK's successor in 1995 was made by:

*les grands chefs et les chefs coutumiers des huit aires culturelles, des représentants des églises, des représentants des associations de femmes, des représentants des mouvements politiques, syndicaux et associatifs [...].*²⁴

Demmer contends that, while the FLNKS was responsible for the creation of the ACAPIK, the CNDPA was created as an oecumenical association and included both 'indépendantistes et RPCR kanaks' in its 'collège politique'.²⁵

Maurice Dhou, identified in the 1997 article cited above as the '*chargé de mission auprès du Conseil Coutumier du territoire et secrétaire du [CNDPA]*', is quoted as affirming that the CNDPA '*a pour vocation de sensibiliser, représenter, organiser et coordonner les actions qui seront entreprises durant la décennie 1995-2005*', including commemorations to mark the 24 September each year.²⁶ These 'actions' are identified by Dhou as being inscribed in both, on the one hand, the institutional framework provided by the constitutional incorporation of the Matignon Accords agreement, which he identifies as including '*dispositions qui nous permettent d'affirmer le fait autochtone*', and, on the other, the perspective opened by the UN's declaration of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.²⁷

Each of the events organised by the ACAPIK or the CNDPA from 1994 to mark the 24 September anniversary appear to have constituted predominantly Kanak-focused

²⁴ 'Le Conseil National pour les Droits du Peuple Autochtone de Nouvelle-Calédonie' (1997: 87).

²⁵ Demmer (2007: 48).

²⁶ 'Le Conseil National pour les Droits du Peuple Autochtone de Nouvelle-Calédonie' (1997: 87). The other missions of this association identified by Dhou include collaboration with the UN Human Rights Committee, strengthening and multiplying relations with other indigenous peoples, participating in the elaboration of a UN charter on 'the indigenous question' and promoting all undertakings aiming to develop the rights of indigenous peoples.

²⁷ Ibid.

gatherings held in (and so hosted by) the different Kanak *aires coutumières* and organised around chosen ‘themes’ of particular relevance to Kanak people.²⁸

The post-Noumea Accord CNDPA and the strategic mobilisation of indigenous rights in relation to nickel mining and the environment

According to Demmer, subsequent to the finalisation of the Noumea Accord in 1998, a fundamental shift occurred in the membership and orientation of the CNDPA as a result of the view purportedly held by a number of its founding members that the association’s mission had been achieved – that it had ‘*obtenu pleinement satisfaction, aussi bien sur le plan de la reconnaissance officielle de l’identité kanake que sur celui du fait colonial.*’²⁹ These individuals consequently left the association.

Demmer maintains that the affirmation of ‘indigenous rights’ by certain Kanak groups in the post-Noumea Accord context, including particularly the *Comité Rhéébù nùù* (formed in 2002) and the *Comité autochtone de gestion des ressources naturelles* (CAUGERN; formed in July 2005), two associations which are both closely associated with the CNDPA and the *Sénat coutumier*, became a central strategy in the contestation led by these groups of various aspects of the Goro nickel mining project in the South of the *Grande Terre*.³⁰ As highlighted by Demmer and Trépied, the indigenous rights claimed by these groups (in relation to this particular conflict and the local indigenous populations directly concerned by it, as well as on a more general level and purportedly on behalf of the Kanak people as a whole) were particularly focused on the

²⁸ For instance, in 1994, the gathering was held at *Ko We Kara* in Noumea (‘*aire Drubéa-Kapone*’) and was centred on the theme of ‘*l’enfance*’. In 1995, the event was held in the commune of La Foa (‘*aire Xârâcùù-Xârâgure*’) and its theme was ‘*l’igname*’. In 1996, it took place in the commune of Bourail (‘*aire Ajië-Arhö*’) and the chosen theme was ‘*la terre*’. In 1997, the ‘*fête des peuples indigènes*’ was held on Lifou (‘*aire Drehu*’) and it was focused on the drafting of a ‘*charte minimale*’ of the Kanak people. See MG, ‘La commémoration de la “prise de possession” par le CNDPA : La terre au cœur de la célébration du 24 Septembre’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 18/09/96, 5; ‘LE CNDPA À WAGEJEN : Le peuple kanak à la recherche d’une voie d’émancipation et de développement’, *Construire les Loyautés*, no. 53, September 1997, 30-31.

²⁹ Demmer (2007: 48).

³⁰ LNC itself identifies the ‘*chantier Goro Nickel*’ as having acted as a catalyst in relation to the prominence of the contemporary *revendication* of indigenous rights in New Caledonia. In this connection, the newspaper highlights the independent and/or collective mobilisation of the following (predominantly, if not exclusively Kanak) organisations in relation to Goro Nickel and the associated *revendication* of indigenous rights: USTKE, CSTNC, CAUGERN, *Rhéébù nùù*, CNDPA and the *Sénat coutumier*. ‘Ils ont marché pour la terre’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 10/08/2007, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

interconnected *revendications* of the protection of the environment, the role to be accorded to certain Kanak 'customary' authorities and the economic (and socio-economic) benefits to be guaranteed to local Kanak communities from such mining projects.³¹

Raphaël Mapou, the Secretary-General of the *Comité Rhéébù nùù* since its creation in 2002 and a member of the *Comité 150 ans après* since its creation in 2003, has also identified a shift from the pre- to the post-Noumea Accord context in this connection. Mapou is quoted by LNC in a 2007 article in relation to 'le droit autochtone' as stating that: '[i]l y a eu deux périodes [...]. Avant l'accord de Nouméa, où l'on a assisté à l'émergence d'une reconnaissance par la France. Depuis l'accord, il reste des incompréhensions sur le contenu à donner à ce droit.'³²

According to Demmer, the claims articulated by the *Comité Rhéébù nùù* and associated groups since the early 2000s echo the claims made by different indigenous peoples in similar contexts around the world and draw on various international legal and organisational principles and structures.³³ Demmer contends that these claims represent:

*un moyen pour les Kanaks, au motif de leur autochtonie, de se (re)valoriser dans un contexte où ils ne sont pas souverains — quel que soit celui qui gouverne — en défendant aussi bien leur ancienneté sur le sol, par des droits dits « environnementaux », que leur mode de vie, par des droits dits « collectifs ».*³⁴

Consequently, Demmer maintains that independence is not the immediate priority of these groups in the contemporary context. Rather, they '*espèrent obtenir gain de cause sur les droits autochtones avant même l'échéance du référendum sur l'autodétermination.*'³⁵

³¹ Demmer (2007); Trépied (2012, forthcoming). See also *Comité Rhéébù nùù*, vol. 1, 2008.

³² Marc Baltzer, 'Le droit autochtone revient dans le débat', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 04/08/2007, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

³³ Demmer (2007: 47–48).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 45. This is potentially supported by comments made by Mapou in 2008 as a member of the CNDPA in relation to that association's expressed commitment to realising the application of the 2007 'United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples' in the local institutional context: '[c]e n'est pas politique, on ne parle pas d'indépendance. C'est un projet de société'. Marc Baltzer, 'Les droits autochtones se fêtent et se défendent', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 01/08/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

The *Mwâ Kâ* as ‘*bois tabou*’?

Given the close links between the *Comité 150 ans après*, the CNDPA, the *Sénat coutumier*, the *Comité Rhéébù nùù* and, from 2005, CAUGERN, it is worth highlighting the similarities apparent between the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative and one aspect of the strategy mobilised by these groups in the conflict over the Goro mining project: the erection of two ‘*bois tabous*’ in 2002 and 2008 respectively. The physical form of these *bois tabous*, being large, sculpted statue-poles divided vertically into a number of distinct carved sections, is broadly comparable to that of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue-pole itself.³⁶ Many parallels can also be identified between the discourse and rhetoric mobilised by the groups involved in the erection of these two *bois tabous*³⁷ and that mobilised and reproduced in the local print media in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* statue initiative by certain members of the *Comité 150 ans après* (including particularly Georges Mandaoué and Raphaël Mapou).³⁸

According to *Palabre coutumier*, the official journal produced by the *Sénat coutumier*, the first of these *bois tabou*, called ‘*Göö Vare Kan*’ and erected in 2002 near the site of the Goro nickel mining project, represented: ‘*la première fois dans l’histoire du combat du peuple autochtone que ce symbole kanak est utilise sur le terrain économique de l’exploitation minière.*’³⁹ The second of these *bois tabous*, called ‘*Pii Kon Dââ Moâ*’, was erected on the *Île Ouen* in 2008.⁴⁰ Raphaël Mapou was quoted by LNC in relation to this event as stating that: ‘[à] chaque fois que le peuple kanak se sent menacé dans

³⁶ On the other hand, eight of the carved sections of the *Mwâ Kâ* are designed to represent the eight Kanak *aires coutumières*, which is not similarly the case for either of these *bois tabous*, the carvings of which appear to have more local, regionally-specific referents.

³⁷ See ‘Le bois Tabou, symbole de l’interdit sur les terres’ (2007); Comité Rhéébù nùù (2008b); Comité Rhéébù nùù (2008c); Géraldine Pion, ‘Rheebu Nuù veut planter un bois tabou à l’île Ouen’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/04/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>; Marc Baltzer, ‘Le « non » au tuyau gravé dans un bois sacré’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 14/04/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

³⁸ See particularly Thierry Squillario, ‘Georges Mandaoué : « Le 24 septembre, c’est le début d’un nouveau soleil »’, *Les Infos*, no. 52, 19/09/2003, 2; ‘« L’invité du jeudi », en partenariat avec Radio Djido – Georges Mandaoué : « Il serait bon que des initiatives citoyennes se concrétisent » ; Jerry Delathière : « Le courage, c’est d’assumer l’Accord de Nouméa »’, *Les Infos*, no. 53, 26/09/2003, 4.

³⁹ ‘Le bois Tabou, symbole de l’interdit sur les terres’ (2007).

⁴⁰ Comité Rhéébù nùù (2008c); Géraldine Pion, ‘Rheebu Nuù veut planter un bois tabou à l’île Ouen’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 09/04/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>; Marc Baltzer, ‘Le « non » au tuyau gravé dans un bois sacré’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 14/04/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

*son existence même, il dresse le bois tabou. Ce totem sacré mobilise les esprits des ancêtres.*⁴¹

Two points should be highlighted in relation to Mapou's statements in this passage. Firstly, despite Mapou's representation of the erection of such *bois tabous* as being a Kanak culturo-political mode of action in response to a situation of conflict and an expression of Kanak *revendication*, a *bois tabou* with a broadly similar, carved physical form that was erected near the site of the Koniambo nickel mining project in the Northern Province to mark the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples in 2008 was identified by those responsible as not having had such a *revendicative* signification, being designed rather to mark the Kanak people's presence and its consent for the mining project, as well as to celebrate this international day.⁴² However, the affirmation of this *bois tabou*'s non-*revendicatif* character might seem to be belied by the fact that it was destroyed soon after its erection, apparently by reason of a dispute over the 'customary' ownership of the land on which it had been erected.⁴³

Secondly, despite Mapou's reference to the *bois tabou* erected on the *Île Ouen* in 2008 as a 'totem' (a characterisation that was also echoed in the publication produced in 2008 by the *Comité Rhéébù nùù* which referred to these types of statues as '*bois totem-tabou*'),⁴⁴ it is important to note that 'totem poles' of the type carved by some of the indigenous peoples of North America (and which these '*bois totem-tabou*' and the *Mwâ Kâ* statue itself could be seen to physically resemble) are not a cultural form traditionally produced by Kanak people. The concept of 'totems' is, however, an important element of Kanak culture and tradition.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Géraldine Pion, 'Rheebu Nuù veut planter un bois tabou à l'île Ouen', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 09/04/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

⁴² Marc Baltzer, 'Le bois tabou à terre', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 18/08/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Comité Rhéébù nùù (2008a).

⁴⁵ Indeed, according to Jean-Marie Tjibaou: '*les éléments de la nature [animal, minéral, végétal, phénomène atmosphérique] qui ont servie de médiation entre la parole mythique et l'apparition de l'ancêtre du clan, vont être considérés comme des éléments sacrés du cosmos. Ils sont le symbole (totem) appelé esprit ou ancêtre (grand-père, grand-frère) ou tout simplement « le vieux » du clan.*' Footnote omitted, Tjibaou (1996: 66-67).

In a 2007 interview published by *Palabre coutumier* with the ‘Secrétaire et prote-parole’ of the *Comité 150 ans après* at that time, Adèle Buama, the *Mwâ Kâ* statue is also referred to as a ‘totem’ (by Buama and *Palabre coutumier*) on several occasions.⁴⁶ LNC refers to the statue using the word ‘totem’ in its coverage of the 24 September 2006.⁴⁷ However, in December 2003, another member of the *Comité 150 ans après*, Jean-Marie Nékaré, is quoted as stressing that: ‘[c]e mwâ kâ n’est pas un totem. C’est une case qui représente toute la Calédonie. Et dans cette case, se trouvent les huit aires coutumières.’⁴⁸ This latter statement reflects the dominant construction of the meaning and symbolism of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue articulated by the members of the *Comité 150 ans après*, discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

Despite the broad similarity in the physical form of the *bois tabou* erected in 2002 (and that erected in 2008) and the *Mwâ Kâ* statue created the following year by the *Comité 150 ans après*, and despite the fact that many of the same individuals were involved in the two initiatives, no explicit or implicit link was drawn between them in the local print-media coverage of the *Mwâ Kâ* in 2003 or subsequently. Nor do the issues surrounding indigenous rights in relation to the country’s natural resources or the protection of the environment feature directly or explicitly in the discourse articulated by the *Comité 150 ans après* in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* as it has been reported in the local written press. Nevertheless, such a link has been drawn in other publications by Mapou himself and by Demmer.

The inscription of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in the post-Noumea Accord *revendication* of indigenous rights?

In an interview published by *Mwâ Vée* in 2009, Mapou explicitly represents the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in 2003 as having being inscribed in the *revendication* of indigenous rights which first arose in relation to the Goro nickel mining project. Mapou identifies the ‘Déclaration solennelle du 23 août 2002 du peuple autochtone Kanak, affirmant son droit sur l’espace et le patrimoine naturel de Kanaky (Nouvelle-Calédonie)’ as a key

⁴⁶ Lurton (2007); ‘Signification du MwâKâa’ (2007).

⁴⁷ Yohan Doucet, ‘Mwâ Kâ : aux citoyens absents’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2006, 6.

⁴⁸ Charlotte Antoine, ‘Le mwâ kâ sera le mât d’une pirogue tournée vers l’avenir’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/12/2003, 10.

moment in the articulation of these indigenous rights claims.⁴⁹ He constructs as a key element of this *Déclaration* the principle that, while democratically elected politicians are legitimate political actors representing the country's 'citizens', Kanak 'customary' authorities are also legitimate political actors as representatives of the country's indigenous people.⁵⁰ Indigenous rights (and responsibilities) are constructed as persisting alongside the Western liberal democratic rights (and responsibilities) held by all 'citizens' equally. However, in keeping with the *Déclaration*, Mapou maintains that: '*le droit des citoyens ne peut pas occulter le droit des autochtones.*'⁵¹ In this interview, Mapou's discourse effectively works to overturn the contemporary dominance of democratic principles and actors in the New Caledonian political context and to institute (indeed, to purportedly *reinstitute*) the posited political legitimacy and primacy of certain Kanak 'customary' principles and actors, associated with the indigenous ('historical') rights and responsibilities being posited, affirmed and claimed.⁵²

Notwithstanding the very particular political motivations and interests served by the discourse and position articulated by Mapou in this interview (and, indeed, by the discourse and position articulated in the *Déclaration* itself), they can also be seen to reflect (or refract) a longstanding, highly complex and problematic issue faced by 'Kanak society'. This issue revolves around the question of the appropriate and legitimate respective (separate and/or overlapping) roles and positions as political actors of, on the one hand, Kanak elected representatives, political militants and other actors

⁴⁹ Indeed, Mapou refers to this declaration as representing an '*acte fondateur par rapport à notre proposition de fond*', and as '*un texte fondateur quand on parle de droits autochtones.*' Del Rio (2009: 5). This declaration was signed notably by: Georges Mandaoué, in his capacity at as the President of the *Sénat coutumier* at that time (he would become the inaugural Secretary-General of the *Comité 150 ans après* in 2003, President of the CNDPA in 2004, inaugural Vice-President of the *Parti travailliste* in 2007, an elected member of the Northern Province Assembly in 2009 and member of the New Caledonian Government in 2011); three other members of the *Sénat coutumier*, representing the *aires Djubéa-Kaponé, Xârâciùu* and *Drehu* and including Pierre Zéoula, who would be the President of the *Sénat* in 2003 as well as the inaugural President of the *Comité 150 ans après*; the President of the *Conseil coutumier Djubéa-Kaponé*; Micka Meureureu-Gowé, who was the President of the CNDPA at the time and in 2003, when he would also become the inaugural Vice-President of the *Comité 150 ans après*; and representatives of the CNDPA's, '*collèges associatif, politique, syndical et religieux.*' '*Déclaration solennelle du 23 août 2002 du peuple autochtone Kanak, affirmant son droit sur l'espace et le patrimoine naturel de Kanaky (Nouvelle-Calédonie)*' (2009).

⁵⁰ Del Rio (2009: 5).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² These indigenous rights and responsibilities, and the legitimacy of Kanak 'customary' authorities, relate particularly (but certainly not exclusively) to the country's 'natural heritage' and resources in this discourse.

working within the country's Western democratic political and juridico-administrative structure and, on the other, Kanak 'customary' representatives or authorities as they are, or claim to be (or to have been), recognised by/within 'Kanak society'.

Trépiéd emphasises the long history of this issue, maintaining that:

[i]t first appeared in the 1950s, when local chiefs started to share political power with Kanak who entered electoral politics. Then in the 1970s and 1980s, intense mobilization for Kanak independence imposed the political leadership of FLNKS activists, to the detriment of customary "Elders".⁵³

However, since the entry of Kanak people into electoral politics subsequent to World War II, there has been a significant degree of overlap and interconnection between Kanak 'customary' representatives and Kanak elected politicians and political militants, as confirmed by the personal histories and trajectories of many prominent past and contemporary Kanak politicians and members of the bodies officially created to give effect to Kanak 'customary' representation, such as the *Sénat coutumier*. Moreover, some form of Kanak 'customary' representation has always been advocated by and incorporated into the political programs, platforms and projects developed by the various (predominantly Kanak) pro-independence political parties and organisations since their emergence in the 1970s.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, the *Déclaration solennelle du 23 août 2002* and Mapou's discourse discussed above demonstrate that these issues are very much alive today. Moreover, despite the formal contemporary incorporation of a certain form of Kanak 'customary' representation into the country's politico-institutional system through the *Sénat coutumier* and the *Conseils coutumiers*, considerable contention still surrounds the legitimacy and the appropriate role and position of these bodies and representatives, as well as their 'customary' nature and the means of determining their composition

⁵³ References omitted, Trépiéd (2012, forthcoming: 8).

⁵⁴ For example, while the precise nature of such Kanak 'customary' representation, the means through which it should be incorporated into a broader politico-juridical institutional system and its relationship to democratic representation are questions which received different responses by different groups at different times, these issues constituted a central preoccupation for and subject of reflection at the political congresses held annually by the various pro-independence parties and formations such as the UC, the FI and the FLNKS, particularly in the second half of the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s. Demmer consequently characterises this period as one of '*intense réflexion sociétale*', involving '*une interrogation forte sur le devenir des chefferies dans le future État*': Demmer (2007: 48).

(including in relation to their current exclusion of women and the possibility of moving to elections as the mode of designating their members).⁵⁵

In his 2009 interview, Mapou identifies the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative as having been inscribed in the same perspective and logic articulated by him and identified by him as characterising and animating the *Déclaration solennelle du 23 août 2002*. Thus, Mapou states:

*[L]orsque nous avons créé le Mwâ Kâ, en 2003, nous nous sommes inscrits dans le même esprit et, même si nous étions déjà en désaccord avec Jacques Lafleur, nous avons négocié avec lui pour le planter à Nouméa. Le sens de notre démarche, c'était de dire : « Nous vous reconnaissons en tant que représentant des citoyens, mais vous, reconnaissez les structures coutumières comme représentants légitimes du peuple autochtone de ce pays. »*⁵⁶

However, as seen in Chapter Three, such a distinction between the category of 'citizens' (legitimately represented by their democratically elected politicians) and that of 'the indigenous people' (legitimately represented by their 'coutumiers') is rarely foregrounded or articulated so clearly in the discourse of the organisers of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative from 2003 as this was reported in the local written press. Moreover, the notion of local 'citizenship' foregrounded by the *Comité 150 ans après* in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative (particularly from 2005) appears in the majority of cases to be constructed as having a broader meaning and scope than any narrow definition limited to certain political and legal rights (such as the right to vote in democratic elections). Nevertheless, significant tensions can be identified in the *Mwâ Kâ* project, particularly in relation to its affirmation (and *revendication*) of Kanak unity, identity and indigeneity (and so, of the accompanying legitimacy, position and rights of the Kanak people and their 'customary' representatives), on the one hand, and its simultaneous affirmation of and posited contribution towards the construction of a 'common destiny' for all New Caledonian 'citizens', on the other. As discussed in the Introduction, this tension is itself inherent within the terms of the Noumea Accord.

⁵⁵ See the discussion in Annex 1.

⁵⁶ Del Rio (2009: 6). Mapou's statement that '*nous étions déjà en désaccord avec Jacques Lafleur*' relates to the fact that, from 1999, Mapou (who was an elected local politician at the time) and his party, the FCCI, had formed a political coalition with Lafleur's RPCR. However, Mapou broke with both the RPCR and the FCCI in 2002 over the mining issue. See *ibid.*, 5; Chappell (2003b: 451).

Demmer also refers to the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative in relation to the *revendication* of 'indigenous rights' articulated by the same set of groups and organisations, but with particular reference to CAUGERN.⁵⁷ This position is potentially supported by the fact that CAUGERN itself appears to have had strong links to the *Comité 150 ans après* (and to the *Sénat coutumier*) since the former's creation in 2005.⁵⁸ Demmer maintains that, in the perspective of these groups, there is a radical disjuncture between, on the one hand, the particular rights and status to be accorded to the Kanak people as the indigenous people of the country and, on the other, the rights and status to be shared equally by all those now recognised as the country's 'citizens':

*[n]ationalité et citoyenneté dans la future Kanaky-Nouvelle-Calédonie imaginée par le CAUGERN pourraient être disjointes : cette fois, seuls les Kanaks seraient citoyens de plein droit face aux autres nationaux. Autre option envisagée (mais très peu diffusée) : les autochtones pourraient être les seuls à détenir la nationalité.*⁵⁹

These possibilities identified by Demmer clearly diverge from the schema currently defined by the Noumea Accord, which creates the category of New Caledonian

⁵⁷ Demmer (2007: 45).

⁵⁸ Indeed, according to Jean-Guy M'Boueri, the President of the *Sénat coutumier* in 2007: '[L]e Caugern est née [en 2005] à la suite d'une tournée effectuée au moment de la mise en place du Mwaka. Deux ou trois sénateurs représentaient le Sénat coutumier au sien du Comité 150 ans. Ils se sont aperçus qu'à travers le pays, les chefferies minières étaient les plus défavorisées.' M'Boueri identifies this as having been the impetus for CAUGERN's creation, which he characterises as a body which '*porte les revendications de ces chefferies, mais aussi au-delà de la mine, il s'intéresse à toutes les questions d'environnement.*' M'Boueri (2007). Note that, as reported by LNC, a communiqué of the FLNKS in 2006 denounced CAUGERN and its members as opportunistic, manipulative and politically and economically (self-)interested. In this communiqué, the FLNKS affirmed its own responsibility and transparency in working towards the construction of an economically and politically independent country, as a signatory of the Noumea Accord. 'Le FLNKS dénonce la manif anti-Goro', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 03/06/2006, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>. Any political motivations or objectives of CAUGERN, the *Comité Rhéébù nùu* and their members were denied at the time by Mapou: Henri Lepot, 'Le Caugern appelle à une « mobilisation citoyenne »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/06/2006, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

⁵⁹ Demmer (2007: 44-45). Note that Demmer contrasts the perspective and strategy she attributes to these groups, and which she characterises as being based on ethnicity, with that of the FLNKS, which she characterises as being based on territoriality. Demmer writes: '[d]'un côté, le FLNKS s'engage dans un rééquilibrage aussi bien politique qu'économique qui favorise une région à majorité kanake — même si elle est susceptible d'évoluer dans ses composantes ethniques. De l'autre, le CAUGERN veut que l'on rende la préséance aux Kanaks en tant que tels, sur une base ethnique et non territoriale': *ibid.*, 45. This distinction is, however, somewhat overstated by Demmer. Numerous policies and positions advocated by the FLNKS also aim to achieve a *rééquilibrage* in favour of Kanak people in general, regardless of any territorial divisions such as the country's three Provinces. Nor can the 'ethnic' and the 'territorial' be clearly distinguished in the claims made by groups such as CAUGERN, which can be seen to construct the indigenous rights and 'customary' authority of the Kanak people as extending to cover the entire archipelago and the surrounding marine areas.

‘citizenship’ (based on long-term residency, not ethnicity) and stipulates that this category may be transformed into local ‘nationality’ at the end of the process depending on the outcome of the referendum(s) programmed to take place from 2014.

However, according to Demmer, despite CAUGERN’s purported consideration of other possibilities in relation to the future definition of ‘citizenship’ and ‘nationality’ in the country, ‘[p]our l’instant, le discours dominant [du CAUGERN] consiste à dire qu’un droit particulier kanak doit perdurer à côté d’un droit commun fédérateur’⁶⁰ (as confirmed by Mapou’s discourse). Demmer maintains that these questions nevertheless remain open⁶¹ and are ‘peu médiatisée[s] par les leaders du CAUGERN, qui préfèrent rappeler leur implication dans la très symbolique édification’ of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue in Noumea, ‘faisant valoir l’accueil, par les Kanaks, de toutes les autres communautés présentes sur le Territoire.’⁶²

Significant tensions can be identified in the discourses articulated by these groups (and by the *Comité 150 ans après* itself in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative) between the affirmation and appropriation of the discourse and legitimacy of, on the one hand, the Noumea Accord and, on the other, different frames of reference and sources of legitimacy (including for instance, at the local and macro-local levels, Kanak ‘custom’ and, at the most general and global level, international law) on the basis of which arguments for the need to reinforce, supplement and go beyond the current framework instituted by the Noumea Accord (so as to give effect to the Kanak people’s indigenous status and rights) are founded.

However, in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative it is important to highlight the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives held by the various members of the *Comité 150 ans après*, who have changed through time and not all of whom have been or are associated with the *Sénat coutumier*, the CNDPA, the *Comité Rhéébù nùu* or CAUGERN. Indeed, some of the *Comité 150 ans après*’s members are prominent pro-independence Kanak

⁶⁰ Demmer (2007: 45).

⁶¹ Similar questions were indeed raised, but not answered, in the magazine published by the *Comité Rhéébù nùu* in 2008, which highlighted the need for Kanak nationalists (with which the *Comité Rhéébù nùu* broadly identifies itself in this text) to address: ‘la question des droits autochtones qui renvoient au projet de société que les nationalistes Kanak entendent promouvoir à partir de maintenant dans la Kanaky indépendante ; Droits autochtones « coutumier » et droits communs – leurs oppositions ou leurs complémentarités ?!’ *Comité Rhéébù nùu* (2008d).

⁶² Demmer (2007: 45).

elected representatives. Moreover, the motivations and intentions of the *Comité 150 ans après*'s different members in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative are not identical, and they have not necessarily remained static through time. For all of these reasons, while a number of dominant characteristics and themes can be identified in the discourse articulated by various members of *Comité 150 ans après* at different points in time, this discourse is not completely homogeneous or uniform.

The *Comité 150 ans après* in 2003

A list of the members and composition of the *Comité 150 ans après* in 2003 appears at the front of the book produced by the *Comité* and entitled *Temps et mémoires du pays Kanak : Du malentendu originel à la communauté de destin*.⁶³ This list gives some idea as to the diversity of the *Comité*'s composition.⁶⁴ However, when compared with various other sources, this list does not appear to be entirely accurate.⁶⁵

In covering the creation of the *Comité 150 ans après* in June 2003, LNC particularly emphasised the (purportedly) '*indépendantiste*' orientation of its members and of the individuals involved in its initial formation (although only the identity of its President is actually cited by the newspaper).⁶⁶ This characterisation might tend to be supported to an extent by the *Comité*'s membership as outlined in its 2003 publication. However, in a

⁶³ *Comité 150 ans après* (2003). Six hundred copies of this book were printed and it was sold on the 24 September 2003 as part of the event organised in Noumea to mark the 150th anniversary of the '*prise de possession*'.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 7. Pierre Zéoula is identified as its President, Micka Meureureu-Gowé, its Vice-President, and Georges Mandaoué, its Secretary-General. Sylvain Pabouty is also identified as the *Comité*'s Adjunct Secretary-General, Françoise Caillard, its Treasurer, and Léonard Poigoune, its Adjunct Treasurer. The remaining members of the *Comité* are listed as follows: '*Déwé Gorode, Rosine Streeter (SULA), Marie Claire Becalocci (Conseil des Femmes), Oriane Troule (Association le Banian), Roch Wamytan, Raphaël Mapou (Comité Rhéebu Nùù), Pasteur Sailali Passa (ADP), Kaoué François Qénégei (USTKE), Milo Poniéwa (USOENC), Richard Sio (UGPE), Elie Poigoune (LDHNC), Narcisse Decoiré (Nouveau courant de pensée), Bernard Lepeu (UC), Charles Washetine (PALIKA), Victor Tutugoro (UPM), François Vouty (FCCI).*'

⁶⁵ For instance, this list does not include Lucienne Moréo-cee, a prominent *Radio Djido* journalist, who is quoted on several occasions by LNC as a representative of the *Comité 150 ans après* in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* in 2003. To give another example, Elie Poigoune, whose name does appear in this list, is quoted by *Palabre coutumier* in 2007 as affirming that: '[p]our moi, ça [le *Mwâ Kâ*] ne représente rien, parce que je n'ai pas participé à l'édification.' 'Que représente le *Mwakâa* pour la population ?' (2007).

⁶⁶ 'Un « Comité du 150^e » pour commémorer le 24 septembre', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 13/06/2003, 13. According to the LNC: '*ce Comité regroupe diverses personnalités du monde coutumier, politique, syndical, associatif et religieux de la mouvance indépendantiste*'.

Radio Djido/Les Infos interview in July 2003, Georges Mandaoué represented the *Comité* as having a broader membership and orientation, beyond Kanak ‘*indépendantistes*’ alone.⁶⁷ The purportedly oecumenical character and orientation of the *Comité* was similarly affirmed in the introductory paragraph to this interview published by LI, in which the paper maintains that the ‘*volonté*’ of its two interviewees (Mandaoué and Mapou, identified as members of the *Comité*): ‘*est de rassembler l’ensemble de la population, toutes les structures associatives et tous les partis politiques autour de cette commémoration.*’⁶⁸

Initial orientation and actions of the *Comité 150 ans après*

According to LNC’s report, the *Comité 150 ans après* was formed in June 2003 specifically with a view to organising ‘*différentes manifestations dans le cadre du 150^e anniversaire de la prise de possession de la Nouvelle-Calédonie par la France*’, culminating on the 24 September 2003 as the date of the anniversary itself.⁶⁹ The daily newspaper represents the *Comité* as an association oriented towards engaging Kanak communities and individuals in relation to ‘*l’événement que représente le 24 septembre 2003*’.⁷⁰ According to this report, three ‘*temps forts*’ were initially identified by the *Comité* in relation to its organisation of the 24 September commemorations. In light of LNC’s characterisation of the *Comité* as comprising (Kanak) individuals representing different sectors of ‘*la mouvance indépendantiste*’, the nature of these planned events as they are outlined in this report can be seen to confirm the newspaper’s construction of the predominantly, if not exclusively, Kanak orientation and focus of the *Comité* at the time of its creation.

⁶⁷ Mandaoué affirms: ‘[n]ous avons souhaité créer une structure ouverte à tous où l’on retrouve l’ensemble du monde politique, syndical et associatif afin que l’ensemble de la population puisse se sentir concernée.’ ‘« L’invité du jeudi », en partenariat avec Radio Djido – 1853-2003 : une commémoration tournée vers l’avenir’, *Les Infos*, no. 41, 04/07/2003, 4.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ ‘Un « Comité du 150^e » pour commémorer le 24 septembre’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/06/2003, 13.

⁷⁰ Ibid. Thus, according to the newspaper: ‘[d]ivers commissions seront chargées de mobiliser les chefferies, les aires coutumières, les communes et les artistes pour organiser régulièrement des manifestations’.

The first of these '*temps forts*' was to be the Presidential visit of Jacques Chirac to New Caledonia (23–26 July), during which the *Comité*:

*souhaite le rencontrer pour lui rappeler « les moments douloureux vécus par le peuple kanak depuis la colonisation et lui demander la reconnaissance des droits du peuple autochtone, droits à la terre, droit à l'autodétermination, droits intellectuels et droits individuels ».*⁷¹

The second initiative identified was the organisation of a '*colloque*' focused on '*les droits des peuples autochtones*', to be held in Noumea on the 9 August, the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. According to LNC, '*divers spécialistes de la question auprès de l'ONU, de l'Unesco ainsi que des juristes canadiens*' were to be invited to attend.⁷² Finally, the '*point culminant des manifestations*' was planned to take place in Noumea on the 24 September in a form as yet to be determined by the *Comité* in June (the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative was conceived closer to the anniversary itself).⁷³

Jacques Chirac's 2003 New Caledonian visit and the prevailing local socio-political context in 2003

The Presidential visit in July 2003 was discussed in April of that year (that is, before the creation of the *Comité 150 ans après*) by Narcisse Decoiré, one of the *Comité*'s future members who would be instrumental in the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative, in an article which appeared in the '*Tribune libre...*' section of LI.⁷⁴ Decoiré's arguments are clearly framed

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid. In early July 2003, Georges Mandaoué is cited by LI as indicating that the *Comité*'s intention was for this '*troisième temps fort*' to be spread over the six weeks preceding the 24 September, and would be devoted to local initiatives: '[c]haque commune pourra célébrer cette commémoration à sa manière. Le 24 septembre, un grand rassemblement sera organisé à Nouméa, ce sera l'occasion d'une grande fête musicale et artistique. Car nous voulons que cette célébration soit avant tout festive.' '« L'invité du jeudi », en partenariat avec Radio Djido – 1853-2003 : une commémoration tournée vers l'avenir', *Les Infos*, no. 41, 04/07/2003, 4.

⁷⁴ Decoiré is identified here as a '[m]embre du FLNKS, pour le courant de Penser.' Narcisse Decoiré, 'Tribune libre...', *Les Infos*, no. 29, 11/04/2003, 1. Another piece by Decoiré had also been published in LI in February. This earlier text, entitled '*Pari sur l'intelligence*', was highly critical of the majority politics then at play in the New Caledonian Government and the Congress, a type of politics Decoiré considered contrary to the letter and spirit of consensus enshrined by the Noumea Accord. Decoiré is identified in relation to this earlier piece as a '[m]ilitant FLNKS pour le courant « Penser nouveau ».' Narcisse Decoiré, 'Pari sur l'intelligence', *Les Infos*, no. 23, 28/02/2003, 2.

by reference to the Kanak people's status and rights as the country's indigenous people.⁷⁵ In this article, Decoiré highlights the significance of the 150th anniversary of French colonisation and asks:

*y aura-t-il, à l'occasion du 150^{ème} de cette fameuse prise de possession du pays de l'homme, un geste fort ou très fort de la part du Président de la République française pour sa visite en pays kanak ? Car quel est l'acte qui définit ou qui fait foi à un pays naguère colonisé et qui aujourd'hui ne l'est pas ?*⁷⁶

In a *Radio Djido/Les Infos* interview published on 4 July by LI, Raphaël Mapou in his capacity as a member of the *Comité 150 ans après* similarly highlights the symbolic significance of the visit of the French President as the first of the three '*temps forts*' identified by the *Comité* in its organisation of events to mark the 150th anniversary.⁷⁷ Indeed, Mapou is quoted in this interview as stating:

*Jacques Chirac vient en Nouvelle-Calédonie l'année de la commémoration de 150 ans de présence française, c'est une date historique ! On peut se demander pourquoi les pouvoirs publics [sic] n'en font pas le thème mobilisateur de cette année.*⁷⁸

The answer to this somewhat rhetorical question (itself designed to cast aspersions on the performance and motivations of the current political and administrative authorities) lies in the unresolved nature of the country's future relationship with France, the anniversary of the '*prise de possession*' necessarily entailing consideration not only of the country's past relationship(s) with the colonial power, but also of the two countries' present and future relationship(s). Furthermore, in 2003, the deep divisions persisting despite the finalisation of the Noumea Accord were becoming increasingly apparent and political and social tensions were running high in New Caledonia.

⁷⁵ Thus, in the opening to this article, Decoiré constructs the meaning and significance of the 150th anniversary in relation to the following construction of the history of colonisation: '1853 – 2003. *La gloire à la France et à la colonie, la peine est aux hommes du pays. On admire les œuvres, on oublie de pleurer sur le sang versé, la liberté perdue des autochtones réduits à ne plus exister en tant que parole, projet et peuple indépendant.*' However, later in this piece, Decoiré affirms that: '[L]'homme du pays, l'autochtone, n'a jamais abdiqué.' Narcisse Decoiré, 'Tribune libre...', *Les Infos*, no. 29, 11/04/2003, 1.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ '« L'invité du jeudi », en partenariat avec Radio Djido – 1853-2003 : une commémoration tournée vers l'avenir', *Les Infos*, no. 41, 04/07/2003, 4.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

In particular, considerable tension existed in relation to the contemporary application of the Noumea Accord, with various pro-independence parties and other groups highly dissatisfied in relation to the unresolved question of voting rights (inextricably interlinked with the question of local 'citizenship' as defined by the Noumea Accord),⁷⁹ the lack of collegiality in the local executive⁸⁰ and the future of the promised economic development and *rééquilibrage*, particularly through the project to construct a new nickel mine (and so, economic pole) in the Northern Province. Concerns in relation to the potential environmental and economic impacts of the Goro mining project in the South of the *Grande Terre* were also mounting.

Moreover, in Saint-Louis, on the outskirts of Noumea, the open violence which had first flared in late 2001 reignited in June 2003.⁸¹ This was a three-way conflict, between two rival Kanak groups, opposed by reason of their competing 'customary' claims to authority over the area as well as their divergent political orientations and affiliations (RPCR and FLNKS respectively), and the local population of Wallisian families, installed in the area since the 1960s. The conflict was also exacerbated by the heavy-handed, military-style intervention of the police, directed by the French State.⁸² While a certain degree of civil calm was achieved through the relocation of all of the Wallisian families to Noumea (completed on the 18 September 2003),⁸³ social tensions in the area still remain high. This violent conflict, constructed by some as primarily 'inter-ethnic' in nature, and the solution instituted to address it have often been juxtaposed with the

⁷⁹ This is discussed further in Chapter Three.

⁸⁰ According to this criticism, to be conformable to the terms of the Noumea Accord, the New Caledonian Government (the local executive) should function on a collegial basis rather than according to the rule of the majority. However, since its creation subsequent to the signing of the Accord, the Government had been dominated by the RPCR-FCCI majority coalition.

⁸¹ Brief summaries of this conflict appear in Chappell (2003b); Chappell (2004); Maclellan (2005).

⁸² As noted by Maclellan (2005: 8). According to LNC's report of the comments made by the French High Commissioner, Daniel Constantin, in September 2003: '*le conflit de Saint-Louis, c'est trois morts, six blessés graves, 13 blessés légers, 200 victimes d'exactions diverses, 19 voitures et 18 maisons atteintes par des balles, un véhicule blindé de gendarmerie incendié, 1 600 coups de feu tirés au cours du seul mois écoulé, et plusieurs interventions à haut risque pour les gendarmes.*' Philippe Frédière, 'Saint-Louis : Daniel Constantin revient sur deux ans de conflit', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/09/2003, 10.

⁸³ Xavier Serre, 'Ave Maria : le village est vide', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 19/09/2003, 9.

Noumea Accord project of forging a 'common destiny', purportedly to be shared by all of the country's ethno-cultural groups.⁸⁴

These issues and the prevailing climate of social tension and malaise served as the backdrop to Chirac's July New Caledonian visit, which was greeted in Noumea and Koné by several protests, organised independently by the UC and two local trade unions, the USTKE and SLUA.

It appears that no action was led specifically by the *Comité 150 ans après* at this time. Nevertheless, the contrast between, on the one hand, the desires and expectations articulated by the *Comité 150 ans après* and its members in relation to the outcomes of Chirac's visit and, on the other, its actual outcomes, is particularly telling. Certainly no '*geste fort*' of the kind called for by Decoiré was delivered by Chirac, who also largely failed to satisfy the avowed expectations of those groups calling for a clear pronouncement of his (and so, the French State's) position in relation to the contentious aspects of the contemporary application of the Noumea Accord.⁸⁵ Nor does Chirac appear to have referred to the 150th anniversary during his visit – an omission which can be understood in light of the prevailing tense social and political context in the country and Chirac's apparent unwillingness to concretely address any highly contentious political issues.⁸⁶ Moreover, one of the few positions Chirac did articulate during his visit – against the inclusion of references to ethnic identity in official State documents

⁸⁴ Moreover, as noted by Maclellan, in 2003 '[p]olitical rhetoric escalated, with opponents of the independence movement describing the treatment of the Wallisian families as tantamount to "ethnic cleansing"'. Footnote omitted, Maclellan (2005: 9).

⁸⁵ Chirac's major public address, delivered in the *Place des Cocotiers* to a crowd apparently estimated by an 'official source' at 15 000 ('Etat de grâce sur la place des cocotiers', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/07/2003, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>), was characterised by Thierry Squillario in LI as a '[l]angue de bois': '[L]es questions sur les dossiers sensibles demeurent plus que jamais en suspens. Car Jacques Chirac n'a apporté aucune réponse claire, nette et précise, se contentant d'utiliser les traditionnels lieux communs et de délivrer les sempiternelles promesses en matière politique et économique.' Thierry Squillario, 'Un discours qui fait pschitt', *Les Infos*, no. 44, 25/07/2003, 2-3. The full text of Chirac's address was published by *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* (24/07/2003, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>).

⁸⁶ It might also be noted that Chirac's visit appears not to have been primarily motivated by the need to address such local concerns or issues. As highlighted in commentary published by LI, the great importance attributed to the Presidential visit by various local politicians and the dominant local press (including notably LNC) was fairly exaggerated, given that the (so-called) '*temps fort*' of Chirac's time in the Pacific was actually the first France-Oceania summit organised with Gaston Flosse in Papeete. Indeed, according to Thierry Squillario, Chirac's New Caledonian stop-over had been included only because, '*le président de la République ne pouvait pas venir à Tahiti sans passer par la Nouvelle-Calédonie.*' Thierry Squillario, 'Chirac met les doigts dans la crise – Une visite présidentielle placée sous haute-tension', *Les Infos*, no. 44, 25/07/2003, 1.

such as the census – itself sparked considerable local controversy, and was, following its subsequent application, characterised by Pascal Naouna in his capacity as the President of the UC in 2004 as representing ‘*un retour à l’Etat colonial*’.⁸⁷

The colloque ‘*Peuple, terre et droits de l’homme*’ – beyond the Noumea Accord recognition of ‘Kanak identity’ and towards ‘*une autre approche de la démocratie et de la citoyenneté*’?

The first event organised by the *Comité 150 ans après* appears to have been the *colloque*, entitled ‘*Peuple, terre et droits de l’homme*’, held at the CCT in August 2003 to coincide with the International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples.⁸⁸ According to the Pastor Sailali Passa, identified as the ‘*porte parole*’ of the *Comité 150 ans après* in an interview with LNC published just prior to this event, the primary objective of the *colloque* was to consider ‘*l’état actuel des droits du peuple Kanak*’, particularly in light of the contemporary local politico-juridical context defined by the Noumea Accord and the broader context of developments in international law.⁸⁹ Further objectives were highlighted in a document published both by LI, as an article ‘*[p]ar le Comité 150 ans après*’, and by the *Revue juridique, politique et économique de Nouvelle-Calédonie*, as a ‘resolution’ adopted by the CNDPA subsequent to the *colloque*.⁹⁰ In this document, the *colloque* is identified as having been organised both in reference to the International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples and ‘*pour lancer la dynamique devant marquer la 150eme année de confiscation de la souveraineté du peuple kanak*’.⁹¹ According to

⁸⁷ ‘L’UC réaffirme le boycott du recensement’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 06/09/2004, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

⁸⁸ This is supported by Mapou’s statements in his summary of the *colloque* published in the *Revue juridique, politique et économique de Nouvelle-Calédonie*: Raphaël Mapou (2003). According to Mapou, the *Comité* ‘*a choisi le 09 août (journée internationale des peuples autochtones) pour lancer l’ouverture de la commémoration des 150 ans de présence française qui va durer jusqu’au 24 septembre 2003 et au-delà*’: *ibid.*, 88.

⁸⁹ ‘Une stratégie juridique pour les peuples autochtones’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 07/08/2003, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

⁹⁰ *Comité 150 ans après*, ‘« Peuple, Terre et Droits de l’homme »’, *Les Infos*, no. 47, 15/08/2003, 2; CNDPA (2003).

⁹¹ *Comité 150 ans après*, ‘« Peuple, Terre et Droits de l’homme »’, *Les Infos*, no. 47, 15/08/2003, 2; CNDPA (2003).

this document, the *colloque* was primarily aimed at defining: ‘*les stratégies juridiques pour la garantie des droits du peuple kanak*’.⁹²

Such a construction of the 24 September anniversary as the date of the ‘*confiscation de la souveraineté du peuple kanak*’ only appears in the discourse of the *Comité 150 ans après* reported in the local written press on one other occasion.⁹³ The dominant formulation used by the *Comité* in relation to the 24 September anniversary in its public discourse appears rather to have been ‘*la prise de possession*’ – a less politically charged expression.⁹⁴

The ‘resolution’ produced and published subsequent to this *colloque* in August presents an analysis of the implications of international legal norms for the contemporary situation of the Kanak people, from which it draws several conclusions. It first notes

⁹² Comité 150 ans après, ‘« Peuple, Terre et Droits de l’homme »’, *Les Infos*, no. 47, 15/08/2003, 2; CNDPA (2003). Indeed, such legal strategies are identified by both Mapou and Mandaoué as being central to the contemporary *revendications* of the Kanak people as a whole in an interview published by LNC just after this *colloque*. Thus, Mapou is cited as confirming that: ‘[n]ous avons effectivement un nouveau défi à relever, celui du droit.’ Mandaoué is quoted as similarly affirming that, in the contemporary context, ‘*la reconnaissance de nos droits doit être actée juridiquement*’. Xavier Serre, ‘Les nouveaux combats des peuples autochtones’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 11/08/2003, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

⁹³ Moreover, this appears in an interview with Mapou published by LNC in relation to this *colloque*: Xavier Serre, ‘Les nouveaux combats des peuples autochtones’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 11/08/2003, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

⁹⁴ On the other hand, the book produced by the *Comité*, comprising a ‘[c]hronologie succincte de l’histoire politique du pays kanak’ and sold on the 24 September 2003, opens with the statement that ‘[c]e document est édité dans le cadre du 150ème anniversaire de la perte de la souveraineté kanak’: Comité 150 ans après (2003: 5). This statement appears above a large, uncaptioned image of the Kanak *chef* and icon of the contemporary Kanak independence movement, Ataï, who led the first large-scale Kanak ‘revolt’ against colonisation in 1878. In the book’s introduction and in the chronology itself, reference is made to the 24 September 1853 as the date of ‘*la prise de possession*’, in inverted commas (ibid., 6, 11). The chronology presented in this 2003 publication, from its opening with ‘*quelques dates avant la période coloniale*’ (beginning with 4000 BC – the ‘[p]eulement de l’Océanie à partir de la Nouvelle-Guinée’) up to the Nainville-les-Roches agreement in July 1983, can be identified as an edited reproduction of the chronology published in a very similar book, itself comprising a politically engaged chronology of significant dates in ‘*l’Histoire du Pays Kanak*’, published 20 years earlier in conjunction with the commemorations organised by the UC to mark the 24 September anniversary in 1983: ‘24 SEPTEMBRE 1983: DRAPEAUX ET CHANTS A POUEBO’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 26/09/1983, 29. A second edition of this book appeared one year later: Association pour la fondation d’un institut Kanak d’histoire modern (1984). The chronology in the *Comité 150 ans après*’s 2003 publication has been extended and concludes in September 2003. In line with Jacqueline Dahlem’s analysis of the 1983/84 publication, the particular use of inverted commas in the 2003 book (which almost exactly mirrors that in the 1983/84 book) can be identified as a means of effecting ‘*la prise de distance par rapport à l’eurocentration du point de vue*’: Dahlem (2008: 70). In this and in various other respects, including notably the discourse articulated in the introduction written by Roch Wamytan (identified as the ‘*président de la commission d’Histoire*’ of the *Comité 150 ans après*: Wamytan (2003)), the inscription of the *Comité*’s 2003 publication in a pro-independence political discourse is relatively explicit. In this respect, this book can be contrasted to the *Comité 150 ans après*’s predominant tendency to avoid any explicit pro-independence political inscription of the *Mwā Kā* statue and initiative in its public discourse.

that the right to self-determination in international law applies to the whole population living in a specific territory and '*se réduit à l'indépendance étatique, sans garantir les droits collectif.*'⁹⁵ However, the resolution also affirms that the right to self-determination has been redefined in relation to the internationally recognised collective rights of indigenous peoples, collective rights which persist regardless of broader politico-juridical State structures.⁹⁶ In light of this international law context, this document states that: '*il apparaît indispensable que l'Accord de Nouméa soit renforcé par une affirmation du droit du peuple autochtone kanak.*'⁹⁷

According to this resolution, while the Noumea Accord formally recognises the existence of the Kanak people, it gives '*aucun contenu juridique*' to the key concept of 'Kanak identity'.⁹⁸ The resolution thus maintains that: '*[L]e projet d'autodétermination du peuple kanak doit être avant tout bâti sur l'affirmation et la définition de cette identité.*'⁹⁹ This document also affirms that:

*[L]'objectif est de permettre la maturation de l'Accord de Nouméa et d'en faire un réel projet répondant à l'aspiration du peuple kanak, respectueux du pluralisme et s'inscrivant hors des chemins classiques de la décolonisation étatique. Ce projet devra reposer sur la consécration du pluralisme juridique impliquant une reconnaissance centrale de la conception kanak du droit et de la relation du peuple kanak à sa terre, la reconnaissance de la diversité culturelle impliquant une autre approche de la démocratie et de la citoyenneté, et la restauration du peuple kanak dans sa souveraineté et sa dignité.*¹⁰⁰

According to this text, the '*revendication du peuple kanak*' (the legitimacy of which is purportedly recognised by the Noumea Accord, but the realisation of which necessitates

⁹⁵ Comité 150 ans après, '« Peuple, Terre et Droits de l'homme »', *Les Infos*, no. 47, 15/08/2003, 2; CNDPA (2003).

⁹⁶ Comité 150 ans après, '« Peuple, Terre et Droits de l'homme »', *Les Infos*, no. 47, 15/08/2003, 2; CNDPA (2003).

⁹⁷ Comité 150 ans après, '« Peuple, Terre et Droits de l'homme »', *Les Infos*, no. 47, 15/08/2003, 2; CNDPA (2003).

⁹⁸ Comité 150 ans après, '« Peuple, Terre et Droits de l'homme »', *Les Infos*, no. 47, 15/08/2003, 2; CNDPA (2003).

⁹⁹ Comité 150 ans après, '« Peuple, Terre et Droits de l'homme »', *Les Infos*, no. 47, 15/08/2003, 2; CNDPA (2003).

¹⁰⁰ Comité 150 ans après, '« Peuple, Terre et Droits de l'homme »', *Les Infos*, no. 47, 15/08/2003, 2; CNDPA (2003).

the '*approfondissement*' of the Accord) and the construction of '*l'avenir de la Nouvelle-Calédonie dans une communauté de destin*' (as projected by the Accord) are both affirmed within this perspective.¹⁰¹

Both local and international strategies of action are identified in this document as necessary to effect the '*prise en compte*' of 'Kanak identity' in the law applicable in New Caledonia.¹⁰² At the local level, this document calls for: '*un lobbying intense [qui] doit être mené auprès du gouvernement et des administrations françaises, ainsi qu'auprès de la société civile.*'¹⁰³ As in Chapter Three, the *Mwâ Kâ* itself can be identified as one such local initiative purportedly aimed at engaging New Caledonian 'civil society', a category constructed as including all of the local population, Kanak and non-Kanak, in a similar manner to the Noumea Accord category of local 'citizenship'.

However, Noumea Accord 'citizenship' is clearly problematised in the resolution produced subsequent to the *colloque* held by the *Comité 150 ans après/CNDPA*, given its calls for: '*la reconnaissance de la diversité culturelle* [that is, by implication, the recognition of 'Kanak identity', which is constructed as synonymous with the indigenous rights and status of the Kanak people] *impliquant une autre approche de la démocratie et de la citoyenneté*'.¹⁰⁴ A tension can similarly be identified between a specifically Kanak focus and a broader focus on New Caledonian 'civil society' as a whole in the activities organised by the *Comité 150 ans après*, including the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative from September 2003, as seen throughout Chapter Three.

¹⁰¹ Comité 150 ans après, '« Peuple, Terre et Droits de l'homme »', *Les Infos*, no. 47, 15/08/2003, 2; CNDPA (2003). A similar position was also articulated two years later by the CNDPA in another resolution adopted in August 2005 and signed by Mandaoué as the CNDPA's President at that time. In this resolution, which was published by LI, the CNDPA again affirms the posited necessity for, and its commitment to pursuing, '*un approfondissement de l'Accord de Nouméa ainsi que le dépassement de certaines limites inhérentes à ce type de processus d'émancipation*', although the precise nature of those 'inherent limits' are not indicated. 'La résolution du CNDPA', *Les Infos*, no. 150, 19/08/2005, 2.

¹⁰² Comité 150 ans après, '« Peuple, Terre et Droits de l'homme »', *Les Infos*, no. 47, 15/08/2003, 2; CNDPA (2003). These strategies are also identified by Mandaoué in almost identical terms in an interview with LNC published just after the *colloque*: Xavier Serre, 'Les nouveaux combats des peuples autochtones', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 11/08/2003, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

¹⁰³ Xavier Serre, 'Les nouveaux combats des peuples autochtones', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 11/08/2003, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

¹⁰⁴ Comité 150 ans après, '« Peuple, Terre et Droits de l'homme »', *Les Infos*, no. 47, 15/08/2003, 2; CNDPA (2003).

On the other hand, in the discourse articulated by members of the *Comité 150 ans après* specifically in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative as reported in the local written press from September 2003, ‘citizenship’ was constructed in relatively broad and inclusive terms and the *Comité*’s discourse and project appear to have become increasingly commensurate with the discourse and socio-political project of the Noumea Accord itself. However, as seen in Chapter Three, just as the position articulated in the resolution adopted subsequent to the *colloque* in August 2003 affirmed and drew on the terms of the Noumea Accord while arguing for the need to ‘reinforce’ and ‘extend’ it ‘*par une affirmation du droit du peuple kanak*’,¹⁰⁵ so too the discourse of the *Comité 150 ans après* in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* can be seen to affirm the Noumea Accord framework and process, while simultaneously seeking (often implicitly) to reframe and go beyond it through symbolically and concretely reinforcing the recognition of (specific constructions of) the identity and legitimacy of the Kanak people (and, indeed, of their contemporary ‘customary’ representatives) within New Caledonian society.

¹⁰⁵ Comité 150 ans après, ‘« Peuple, Terre et Droits de l’homme »’, *Les Infos*, no. 47, 15/08/2003, 2; CNDPA (2003).

ANNEX 12

The *Place des Cocotiers*, the ‘heart’ of Noumea

The *Place des Cocotiers* is a public square situated at the physical and symbolic ‘heart’ of New Caledonia’s capital city, Noumea. As seen in Annex 1, Noumea itself represents the past and present actual and symbolic centre of non-Kanak settlement and political and economic dominance and ‘power’ in the country. Thus, in an article published in 2000/2001, Sylvain Pabouty (a pro-independence Kanak activist and politician based in the Southern Province) maintains that:

*[e]n dépit d’un nom d’origine kanak, adoptée en 1866 pour remplacer « Port de France », Nouméa [...] a toujours été une ville blanche, symbole du colonialisme français dans cette région du Pacifique.*¹

Pabouty also contends that: ‘*la population océanienne, en particulier kanak, a toujours été étrangère dans cette ville de Nouméa.*’² He continues: ‘*[d]’ailleurs, il suffit de se référer aux noms attribués aux quartiers, places, et rues de Nouméa qui ne se réfèrent pas aux noms kanak.*’³

In an article published in late 2009, LNC itself acknowledged the ‘*déséquilibre entre la culture mélanésienne et l’héritage de la France coloniale*’ in the country’s capital city, similarly citing as one example of this the fact that, while Noumea has close to nine hundred named streets, ‘*seulement une quinzaine porte un nom Kanak.*’⁴ The newspaper also states:

[c]e constat est d’autant plus surprenant dans les récents quartiers de la capitale, construits après l’Accord de Nouméa, et pour lesquels on aurait pu s’attendre à un signe d’ouverture. La question a déjà été posée

¹ Pabouty (2000-2001: 75). Dussy highlights the existence of (and strategies behind) the various competing explanations of the Kanak origins of the city’s name, ‘*Nouméa*’, asserted by the different groups claiming ‘customary’ authority over the Noumea area: see Dussy (1996: 284-285).

² Pabouty (2000-2001: 77).

³ Ibid. Pabouty does go on to acknowledge that a (very) few Noumean streets do have Kanak names.

⁴ Coralie Cochin, ‘Qui veut la peau de l’amiral Orly ?’, *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 13/12/2009, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

*lors de précédents conseils municipaux. Or, c'est le maire lui-même qui arrête la décision.*⁵

LNC does not elaborate further on this suggested apparent disjuncture between the local context established by the Noumea Accord, on the one hand, and the position and actions of the current Mayor of Noumea in relation to the designation of new suburb and street names in the capital city, on the other. This situation in the capital might in certain respects be contrasted to the initiatives currently being undertaken in the Northern and Islands Provinces to identify and officially recognise and signpost the Kanak names of places in those areas, pursuant to point 1.3.1 of the Noumea Accord's '*Document d'orientation*', which stipulates that: '*[l]es noms kanak des lieux seront recensés et rétablis.*'⁶

Noumea's *Place des Cocotiers* is itself dominated by valorising symbols of and memorials to New Caledonia's colonial history. The *Place des Cocotiers* comprises four public squares, arranged in a row, in the middle of what is today the city's commercial centre. These four squares were created successively between 1861 and 1892 in an area that had previously been covered by marshland and was progressively filled in through various civil engineering projects of the colonial administration, realised with forced convict labour.⁷ The first of the squares to have been created was the '*Jardin de la Troupe*', renamed the '*Place Feillet*' in the early 1900s in honour of the late Governor Paul Feillet.⁸ Feillet had been an instrumental Governor of the colony from 1894, both in terms of redefining and encouraging its European settlement (he was instrumental in obtaining the abolition of penal transportation to the colony in 1897,

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*, 'Document d'orientation', point 1.3.1. On this subject, the official website of the Northern Province states that its '*programme de rétablissement des noms de lieux en langue kanak*' is designed to redress the current situation in which, '*[p]our la plupart hérités de la colonisation, les toponymes actuels – qu'ils désignent des lieux en français ou qu'ils déforment les noms d'origine – ne reflètent [pas] l'identité kanak.*' According to the website, in implementing this program, '*[u]ne double signalétique (noms des communes, des tribus, des creeks, des rivières et lieux dits) comportant le nom en langue suivi du nom en français sera mis en place. Celle-ci permettra de rétablir le patrimoine culturel kanak tout en respectant la diversité culturelle du pays.*' Province Nord, 'La culture : Patrimoine', 2003, <http://www.province-nord.nc/vivre/vivre_culture_patrimoine.asp>.

⁷ Faure-Bourdoncle and Kling (1988: 84, 92-93, 99, 125, 200, 226); Louis-José Barbançon, 'Un remblai nommé partage', *Les Infos*, no. 54, 03/10/2003, 2.

⁸ Faure-Bourdoncle and Kling (1988: 125); Ville de Nouméa, 'Vivre : Repères urbains : Place des Cocotiers (Centre Ville)', <http://www.ville-noumea.nc/vivre/reperes/urbains/place_des_cocotiers.pop.asp>.

which he characterised as turing off the ‘*robinet d’eau sale*’, and in encouraging free settlement to the colony, particularly with a view to stimulating its economy through agriculture) and in relation to the further development of the *Code de l’Indigénat* (particularly through the administrative creation of ‘*districts indigènes*’, ‘*grands chefs*’ and ‘*petits chefs*’, and through the institution of a head tax on Kanak subjects).⁹ The principal feature of this square is the Napoleon III-style bandstand,¹⁰ originally constructed in 1878 and entirely renovated in 1986.¹¹

The adjacent square, the ‘*Place Courbet*’, was similarly definitively named after a late former Governor of the colony, the Admiral Amédée Anatole Courbet, who held the position of Governor from 1880 to 1882.¹² According to Marie Thérèse Faure-Bourdoncle and Georges Kling (who co-authored a book published by the very conservative and ‘loyalist’-oriented *Société d’Etudes Historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* in 1988 entitled, ‘*Les Rues de Nouméa*’), during his appointment as Governor, Courbet: ‘*introduisit dans l’île la main d’œuvre asiatique, développa l’agriculture, les mines et les routes et fit ouvrir le collège de Nouméa.*’¹³ This square’s main feature is the monumental stone ‘*Fontaine Céleste*’, adorned with a Greco-Roman statue and created by local sculptor Paul Mahoux, who was assisted by penal labour in the construction of the fountain.¹⁴ The fountain was officially inaugurated on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of French colonisation, the 24 September 1893.¹⁵ It serves as the ‘*point 0*’ from which all distances in New Caledonia’s *Grande Terre* are measured, and consequently constitutes the official administrative geographical centre of the country’s principal island.¹⁶

The third square, the ‘*Place de la Marne*’, was named in reference to the significant battles which took place on the banks of the Marne river in (Metropolitan) France

⁹ See Merle (1995: 277-318).

¹⁰ Chappell (2004: 392).

¹¹ ‘Quartiers d’été’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 06/01/2009, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

¹² Faure-Bourdoncle and Kling (1988: 99).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 92-93.

¹⁵ Ibid., 93.

¹⁶ Ibid., 92; Ville de Nouméa, ‘Vivre : Repères urbains : Place des Cocotiers (Centre Ville)’, <http://www.ville-noumea.nc/vivre/reperes/urbains/place_des_cocotiers.pop.asp>.

during World War I.¹⁷ It now serves primarily as the site of weekly evening markets (*‘les Jeudis du centre-ville’*) and other outdoor events.

Finally, at the far end of the *Place des Cocotiers* from the *Place Feillet*, and overlooked by Noumea’s *Hôtel de ville*, is the *‘Square Orly’*. This square features a statue of the Admiral Jean-Baptiste Orly, who was Governor of New Caledonia from 1878 to 1880. Orly is most readily identified as the Governor who successfully (and violently) suppressed the 1878 Kanak rebellion led by the *chef* Ataï. Orly also undertook the subsequent campaign of brutal reprisals against Kanak communities on the *Grande Terre*. Faure-Bourdoncle and Kling’s 1988 characterisation of Orly in their discussion of this public square and statue can be seen to illustrate a conservative French-‘loyalist’ settler perspective on Orly as an historical figure. According to these authors, Orly:

*fut certainement un des plus grands chefs du territoire et ce n’est pas sans raison que la population lui offrit, à son départ le 21 août 1880, un oiseau-lyre en argent massif et qu’elle vint l’acclamer sur le quai.*¹⁸

In 1974, the bronze bas relief depicting the Kanak submission to Orly was removed from the base of the statue subsequent to a petition and protests by the *Foulards Rouges* and *Jeunesses Calédoniennes*.¹⁹ A petition to have the entire statue removed was launched in October 2009 by a Metropolitan-French activist of the *Ligue des droits de l’homme*, Odile Veillerette.²⁰ In its coverage of this petition, LNC identifies Orly primarily as *‘le gouverneur qui réprima l’insurrection du grand chef Ataï, en 1878’*, although the newspaper also notes certain other, more positive aspects of his Governorship.²¹ Thus, LNC states that:

[d]ès son arrivée, il fut confronté à une invasion de sauterelles, à la faillite de la banque Marchand et, comme évoqué plus haut, à l’insurrection kanak. Il lui a fallu moins d’une année pour mater la rébellion et rétablir la situation à l’avantage de la France coloniale. [...]

¹⁷ Faure-Bourdoncle and Kling (1988: 200); Maclellan (2005: 6).

¹⁸ Faure-Bourdoncle and Kling (1988: 226).

¹⁹ Ibid., 227; Coralie Cochin, ‘Qui veut la peau de l’amiral Orly ?’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/12/2009, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

²⁰ Coralie Cochin, ‘Qui veut la peau de l’amiral Orly ?’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/12/2009, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

²¹ Ibid.

« Lors de son passage en Nouvelle-Calédonie, il a dû faire face à un très gros cyclone, durant lequel il a beaucoup donné la main aux habitants, souligne Louis-José Barbançon. La statue symbolise aussi la reconnaissance de cette action. »²²

Nevertheless, in its treatment of the petition to have the statue removed, the newspaper also acknowledges ‘le déséquilibre entre la place accordée aux vestiges de la France coloniale et celle faite à la culture kanak, malgré la signature de l’Accord de Nouméa’, and notes (local ‘Calédonien’ historian) Louis-José Barbançon’s suggestions for the incorporation of a Kanak symbol in the *Place des Cocotiers*.²³

From the above discussion it is clear that the present-day *Place des Cocotiers* is not only entirely devoid of Kanak cultural symbols or valorising references, but is replete with monuments and symbols representing French colonial history and dominance in New Caledonia, including this particularly controversial statue of Orly, which still effectively celebrates one of the most violent and brutal episodes of Kanak repression, despite the removal of the statue’s original bas relief depicting this more explicitly. Writing in 2005, Nic Maclellan referred to the *Place des Cocotiers* as an ‘arena of French nostalgia’, and highlighted the fact that it

has become a rallying point for the city and a symbol of French pride.

Thousands of Rassemblement supporters have massed in the square to cheer visiting French Presidents. Kanak political activists have also gathered there in defiance, as if encroaching on enemy turf.²⁴

A recent illustration of this in 2003 was the very large, predominantly ‘loyalist’²⁵ crowd which gathered in the *Place des Cocotiers* for Jacques Chirac’s major public address during his official Presidential visit to New Caledonia in July of that year.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Maclellan (2005: 6).

²⁵ Although it might be noted that LNC’s report of this event can be seen to have represented the crowd as having included pro-independence supporters, but as having still been overwhelmingly supportive of Chirac (pro-independence supporters included). The strategic, political implications of this representation of the event are readily apparent. See ‘Etat de grâce sur la place des cocotiers’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/07/2003, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

ANNEX 13

The *Place du Mwâ Kâ* in the surrounding urban landscape

As indicated in Chapter Three, the symbolic significance of the site chosen for the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* is connected to particular features of the surrounding urban landscape. The negative implications of the square's location in the middle of a parking lot were highlighted by a young Kanak man who is quoted by LNC in its coverage of the 24 September 2007 in a section devoted to the views of 'the public' present at the *Mwâ Kâ* event.¹ Identified simply as, '*Henrick, 21 ans, Nouméa*', Henrick is cited as affirming that, while he was involved in carrying the statue on the 24 September 2003,

*[a]ujourd'hui, quand je le vois sur un parking, ça m'embête. Normalement, ça devait symboliser notre lutte, construire quelque chose. Mais posé entre des voitures, comme ça, ça ne symbolise rien du tout. C'est comme si on nous disait qu'on n'allait jamais y arriver. Comme si on nous posait dans un coin de Nouméa et qu'on disait : reste là, tais-toi.*²

Another perspective on the statue's placement is given in the same section of this article in the comments made by a 46 year-old Kanak woman from Saint-Louis, '*Yvette*'.³ Yvette appears to attribute a different, if interconnected significance to the 24 September anniversary commemorations, on the one hand, and the *Mwâ Kâ* statue, on the other. In relation to the 24 September she states that: '*[a]u départ, c'est un deuil kanak. Mais maintenant qu'on parle de journée citoyenne, il faut bien changer les mentalités. On célèbre l'acceptation des autres communautés par le premier peuple.*'⁴ In relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* statue she is cited as making the following comments:

[c]'est une bonne chose. Il n'y a rien, à Nouméa, qui rappelle qu'on se trouve sur une terre kanak. On n'a que ça. J'aurais préféré qu'il soit là-

¹ Marc Baltzer, 'Citoyenneté partagée – Que représentent pour vous le 24 Septembre et le Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes*, 25/09/2007, 2. This section includes quotations from four individuals, implicitly chosen at random: a 21 year-old Kanak man from Noumea, a 68 year-old Kanak man from Goro, a 46 year-old Kanak woman from Saint-Louis and a 62 year-old Frenchman from Nantes.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

*bas [sur la place des Cocotiers]. Mais c'est le même soleil de Kanaky qui brille dessus, non ?*⁵

As with Henrick's identification of the *Mwâ Kâ*'s intended symbolism of '*notre lutte*' (that is, by implication, the 'struggle' of the Kanak people, which is generally associated, if not conflated with the struggle for the country's political independence from France), Yvette's reference to Noumea as being located '*sur une terre kanak*' and her identification of the country as a whole as '*Kanaky*' indicates the interpretation and discursive inscription of the *Mwâ Kâ* and related initiatives from/in a pro-Kanak independence political framework by these two individuals.

One year later, LNC published an article in its edition in print on the 24 September 2008, entitled '*« Le Mwa Kaa, c'est où ça ? »*', in which the newspaper affirmed that 'numerous' people, '*interrogés dans la rue*' in Noumea,

*auraient bien vu [le Mwa Kaa] place des Cocotiers : « La place des Cocotiers, c'est le lieu le plus fréquenté de Nouméa, alors si on avait vraiment voulu lui faire une vraie place, lui accorder de l'importance, il y serait déjà. Ce n'est pas seulement lors d'une journée que l'on doit penser au destin commun, c'est tous les jours. Là-bas, tout le monde l'aurait vu », s'agace Henriette.*⁶

However, the main thesis of this article is that, while many people, purportedly from all ethnic groups, know of the *Mwâ Kâ*, its history and symbolism, very few know the location of its permanent installation.⁷ Indeed, LNC maintains that '*la majorité des personnes interrogés non loin de la place du Mwa Kaa, ne savent même pas où cela se trouvent*'.⁸

This can be contrasted to the view articulated by one commentator, Adriano Favole, who maintained in 2008 that the *Mwâ Kâ*'s permanent location '*dans les environs du marché*' is: '*un détail peu souligné par les chroniques locales et toutefois digne d'intérêt dans la mesure où la fréquentation assidue du marché confère au monument*

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ LL, '*« Le Mwa Kaa, c'est où ça ? »*', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/09/2008, 10.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

une visibilité importante'.⁹ However, while the Noumean Market certainly attracts considerable numbers of locals and tourists alike, the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* itself is located in a corner of the parking lot at some distance from the Market and away from the city centre, which means that few pedestrians walk through the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* or enter it incidentally, without a conscious or specific intention to do so. Moreover, one of the possible reasons identified by LNC in its 2008 article for the purported ignorance of many Noumean locals as to the statue's permanent location in the city is the landscaped garden which has been created in the square around the statue, '*qui le masque et qui fait que de nombreuses personnes ne le voient pas.*'¹⁰

This 2008 article published by LNC¹¹ can be seen to reflect the change in this newspaper's representation of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue and associated initiatives as increasingly socially and politically marginal, contested and partisan in its coverage published particularly from 2006 to 2008, when compared to the paper's earlier tendency to emphasise the inclusive and broadly consensual nature of the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative. On the other hand, the article published by LNC in December 2009 in relation to the petition to remove the Orly statue from the *Place des Cocotiers* cites the '*histoire du Mwâ Kâ*' as a '*très bon exemple*' of the '*déséquilibre entre la place accordée aux vestiges de la France coloniale et celle faite à la culture kanak, malgré la signature de l'Accord de Nouméa*' in the capital city, given that:

[c]e bois symbolisant les aires coutumières kanak, que beaucoup voulaient place des Cocotiers, a finalement été relégué sur le parking de la Baie-de-la-Moselle, après avoir passé un an dans la cour de la province Sud. Masqué par le jardin paysager qui l'entoure, le monument passe souvent inaperçu, alors qu'il se voulait un symbole de rencontre entre les communautés.¹²

This article was published subsequent to the 24 September 2009 event, the daily's coverage of which was more positive than in previous years. LNC thus represented this

⁹ Favole (2008: 422).

¹⁰ LL, '« Le Mwa Kaa, c'est où ça ? »', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/09/2008, 10.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Coralie Cochin, 'Qui veut la peau de l'amiral Orly ?', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/12/2009, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

2009 event as a ‘fête [de la citoyenneté] en construction’, and as having ‘retrouv[e]’, to a certain degree, ‘un visage fédérateur.’¹³

The *Mwâ Kâ*’s definitive installation in the *Baie de la Moselle* is not only significant by reason of its segregation from and comparative marginalisation in relation to the city’s symbolic, physical and commercial centre, the *Place des Cocotiers*. Another significant aspect of the *Mwâ Kâ*’s placement in the *Baie de la Moselle* stems from the fact that it is located between two other commemorative spaces, situated at either end of the parking lot and aligned along the same side of the *Avenue du maréchal Foch* as the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*. This was also highlighted by Lafleur in December 2003, when he characterised the *Mwâ Kâ* as being situated ‘au milieu des places de commémoration qui ont appartenu à d’autres peuples’,¹⁴ as seen in Chapter Three. The two commemorative places in question are the *Mémorial américain* and the *Place Yves Tual*.

The *Mémorial américain* was erected in 1992 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival in New Caledonia of the USA’s armed forces during World War II.¹⁵ This monument and the surrounding garden cover a relatively small area compared to the substantial public square and now well-established garden of the *Place Yves Tual*. The *Place Yves Tual* was first purportedly officially inaugurated by the unveiling of a plaque (inscribed simply with ‘*Place Yves Tual*’) attached to a tree in the *Baie de la Moselle* parking lot on the 18 January 1985 by Roger Laroque (the RPCR Mayor of Noumea) and Dick Ukeiwé (the RPCR President of the Territorial Congress).¹⁶ This short ceremony, which concluded with the singing of the French national anthem, took place a week after the shooting of 17 year-old Yves Tual (nephew of the leader of the local *Front National*, Roger Galliot)¹⁷ on the 11 January on his family’s property near

¹³ Sylvain Amiotte, ‘Une fête en construction’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2009, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

¹⁴ Charlotte Antoine, ‘Le mwâ kâ sera le mât d’une pirogue tournée vers l’avenir’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/12/2003, 10.

¹⁵ The monument was entirely renovated in 2001: ‘Ils ont marqué Nouméa’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/03/2002, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

¹⁶ ‘UNE « PLACE YVES TUAL » BAIE DE LA MOSELLE’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 19/01/1985, 2.

¹⁷ Leblic (2003: 304).

Boulouparis.¹⁸ Tual's death sparked 24 hours of violent anti-independence riots in central Noumea and the decree of a State of Emergency by the French Administration over the entire Territory, particularly following the assassination on the 12 January 1985 of Eloi Machoro¹⁹ and Marcel Nonnaro²⁰ by the police special services near La Foa.²¹ According to the local 'European' and 'loyalist' history of Noumea's street and place names published in 1988 by Faure-Bourdoncle and Kling:

*[I]a population de Nouméa a spontanément donné ce nom aux parkings de la Moselle où elle se rassemblait pour des manifestations de loyalisme à l'égard de la France. Depuis le C.M. [Conseil Municipal de Nouméa] du 7 mars 1985, cette appellation est devenue officielle, mais elle est réservée à l'espace vert en face du commissariat de police, où une petite stèle a été placée.*²²

The public square of this *Place Yves Tual* was thus only realised later in 1985. The creation of this commemorative public square was a politically charged, symbolic and concrete act of the local anti-independence politico-administrative authorities during a particularly violent period of '*les événements*'. Moreover, today, it represents the only commemorative marker in the capital city devoted explicitly and unambiguously to an event in or aspect of this particularly important and violent period of the country's

¹⁸ 'LE MEURTRE DE NASSIRAH FAIT PENSER A DES REPRESAILLES – YVES TUAL, 17 ANS ET DEMI, A ETE TUE D'UNE BALLE DANS LA TETE', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 12-13/01/1985, 2-3.

¹⁹ Machoro had been an elected member of the Territorial Assembly and was the Secretary-General of the UC subsequent to the assassination of Pierre Declercq. From the 1 December 1984, Machoro was the 'Minister of Security' of the Provisional Government of Kanaky. Mokaddem (2005a: 197). Subsequent to his death, Machoro quickly became one of the most prominent and celebrated martyrs of the Kanak independence movement. Indeed, Mokaddem maintains that, '*grâce à son action, à son charisme, à sa trajectoire fulgurante, [Eloi Machoro] renoue le lien continu et ancestral avec la figure emblématique d'Ataï, à la tête de l'insurrection de 1878. La mémoire collective scande les récits en nouant entre elles ces figures imaginaires.*' Mokaddem (2005a: 194-195).

²⁰ Nonnaro was an FLNKS militant from the same region as Machoro. He has been identified by René Guiart as Machoro's '*ami et fidèle compagnon*'. René Guiart (1991: 136).

²¹ Leblic (2003: 304); 'EN REACTION A LA MORT D'YVES TUAL – MANIFESTATION VIOLENTE AU HAUSSARIAT ET LE FEU A LA MAISON DE GUIART – LES FORCES DE L'ORDRE ETAIENT FERMES ET LES MECONTENTES DETERMINES', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 12-13/01/1985, 5-7; 'L'ETAT D'URGENCE DECRETE PAR EDGARD PISANI', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 14/01/1985, 3; 'LE 24 HEURES D'EMEUTE DE NOUMEA', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 14/01/1985, 4-10.

²² Faure-Bourdoncle and Kling (1988: 297).

recent history,²³ and it is still an important symbol and '*lieu de mémoire*' for many 'loyalist' individuals and groups.²⁴

Lafleur's characterisation of these two areas as '*des places de commémoration qui ont appartenu à d'autres peuples*',²⁵ might consequently be interpreted as referring, on the one hand, to the American people or to those in New Caledonia particularly attached to the period of American presence in the country, and, on the other, to the local anti-independence 'loyalists' during the period of '*les événements*', who are potentially assimilated in this 'loyalist' perspective to the local non-Kanak²⁶ 'European'/French population overall. This apparent implicit construction of local non-Kanak 'European'/French 'loyalists' as a 'people' is significant in that it can be seen to construct this group as having an equivalent legitimacy and status to the Kanak people.

Another symbolically significant feature of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*'s location in the *Baie de la Moselle* is the fact that it lies directly opposite the *Musée de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, on the other side of the *Avenue du Maréchal Foch*. This Museum houses the largest and richest collection of Kanak 'artefacts' in the world,²⁷ which were primarily 'collected' during the country's official colonial period.²⁸ In consequence, this Museum

²³ However, 19 young coconut trees were planted along the outer edge of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* adjacent to the *Avenue du maréchal Foch* seemingly in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the deaths of the 19 Kanak pro-independence militants killed at the end of the hostage crisis on Ouvéa on the 5 May 1988. Their addition and symbolism does not appear to have been covered in the local written press and there was no indication on the site itself as to their symbolic significance. These plants appear to have now been removed.

²⁴ This was attested by the ceremony organised by Pierre Frogier's *Rassemblement-UMP* in the *Place Yves Tual* to mark the twentieth anniversary of Tual's death on the 11 January 2005 – see 'Mémoire: IL Y A 20 ANS, L'ASSASSINAT D'YVES TUAL – Le pardon n'est pas l'oubli', *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, no. 877, 13-19/01/2005, 4. It is also apparent from the criticism of the construction of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*, identified as a symbol of '*l'idéologie indépendantiste*', next to the *Place Yves Tual* expressed in a 2005 communiqué released by the highly conservative and staunchly 'loyalist' party, the *Mouvement pour la France*, and published by LI: Le bureau du MPF (Mouvement pour la France), 'Communiqué', *Les Infos*, no. 156, 30/09/2005, 2.

²⁵ Charlotte Antoine, 'Le mwâ kâ sera le mât d'une pirogue tournée vers l'avenir', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 22/12/2003, 10.

²⁶ Given their implicit distinction from the '*Mélanésien*s' who are apparently now represented by the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* according to Lafleur.

²⁷ It also houses collections of 'artefacts' from different peoples throughout the Pacific, but its primary focus up to the present has been its Kanak collections.

²⁸ The Preamble of the Noumea Accord expressly acknowledges that '*le patrimoine artistique kanak était nié ou pillé*' during colonisation, and identifies this as one aspect of the '*négarion des éléments fondamentaux de l'identité kanak*'. *Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998*, 'Préambule', point 3.

is symbolically associated by many Kanak with the theft and alienation of Kanak culture from the Kanak people in the colonial past and continuing into the present through the European objectification and reduction of that culture to static ‘artefacts’ from an ‘authentic’ past now lost forever. This negative symbolic association is reflected in many of the Kanak criticisms of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue’s placement in this location opposite the Museum. For example, Nick Maclellan reproduces the following comments that were posted on a Kanaky chat room, <<http://www.kanaky.org>>, on the 29 September 2003:

[t]here can be no chance of a Kanak monument in Noumea White City, but Jacques Lafleur wants to admire his latest spoils of war in his own garden. Then, before the end of the year, it will be placed in front of the Museum. Hardly born, already mummified.²⁹

The same criticism was also raised in an article published in LI in September 2005 and written by Ignace Païta who, as noted in Chapter Three, claims to represent the legitimate Kanak ‘customary’ ‘owners’ of and authorities over the Noumea area. Païta recalls his characterisation in an earlier article of ‘*le poteau dit « Mwaka »*’ as ‘*un élément bancal d’une construction bâtarde sans lien avec la terre où il se trouve.*’ Païta then continues:

[p]rochainement, à l’occasion du 24 septembre, sera inaugurée la place où la poteau nommé « Mwaka » poteau solitaire, SDF pendant un temps malgré les jérémiades du comité dit de 150 ans, pris en otage ensuite sous l’ancien régime avant d’être fiché, près du Musée, tel une pièce du passé, par le nouveau pouvoir en place, pourtant informé du contentieux à ce sujet par le Clan chef et lié à la terre...³⁰

The question of the *Baie de la Moselle* as ‘Kanak land’ was also raised in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ* by Henry Bailly (a long-time pro-independence Kanak militant and politician, who was notably a member of the *Fouleurs Rouges* and a member of the ‘*Gouvernement Tjibaou*’ in the period leading up to ‘*les événements*’) and by Louis-

²⁹ Maclellan (2005: 7). Also citing Maclellan, Favole reproduced this quotation slightly differently and in French, as follows: ‘[p]as question d’un monument kanak à Nouméa-la-Blanche ! Ainsi, Jacques Lafleur pourra faire admirer sa dernière prise de guerre dans son jardin ! ... À peine né, aussitôt momifié ! Au lieu de symboliser le présent et l’avenir, il représentera devant le Musée le passé de l’âme kanak, telle une croix sur un tombeau !’ Favole (2008: 422).

³⁰ Djumwâ Ignace Païta, ‘Sénat coutumier ? Du fait...’, *Les Infos*, no. 155, 23/09/2005, 3.

José Barbançon (a local teacher, author and historian, who has also been engaged politically from the 1970s in various capacities in favour of increasing New Caledonian autonomy and in opposition to the local ‘loyalist’ conservatives³¹). Bailly is quoted by *Palabre coutumier* in 2007 as making the following comments in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ*: ‘[d]isons que son lieu d’implantation est mal venu. Ici c’est de la scorie, ce n’est pas de la terre kanak.’³² This criticism relates to the fact that, until 1970, marshland and the sea still covered the area up to the Museum – as noted by LNC, this area was transformed into its current state through a ‘dernière campagne de remblai’.³³ This change would consequently have taken place well within the living memory of the members of the *Comité 150 ans après* and the other key political actors in relation to this affair.

In contrast to Henry Bailly, Louis-José Barbançon referred to this fact in a positive light in relation to its potential implications for the symbolism of the *Mwâ Kâ*. Thus, in an article signed by Barbançon (identified at the end of this article as a ‘historien calédonien’) and published by LI soon after the 24 September 2003, he argues for the permanent installation of the *Mwâ Kâ* statue either in the *Place des Cocotiers* or in the *Baie de la Moselle*, which are both deemed by him to be particularly appropriate locations by very reason of their being ‘terres de remblais’.³⁴ Barbançon writes: ‘[l]e remblai ce n’est pas que de la terre kanake, c’est de la terre kanake plus le fruit de la sueur et du labeur des hommes.’³⁵ He recalls that, in the case of the *Place des Cocotiers*, this labour was the forced labour of convicts, and that, in the case of the *Baie de la Moselle*, the first work of this kind was undertaken by the unemployed (including ‘[d]es Blancs, des Kanaks, des Vietnamiens, des Javanais’) during the ‘grande crise’.³⁶ Echoing the logic of the Noumea Accord’s preamble, Barbançon contends that ‘[l]e remblai c’est la rencontre de la terre légitime parce qu’originelle et de la terre

³¹ In relation to Barbançon’s political engagement at the time of the Tjibaou Government, see Barbançon (2008).

³² ‘Que représente le Mwakâa pour la population ?’ (2007).

³³ ‘Moselle : Surgi de la mer’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 07/03/2007, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

³⁴ Louis-José Barbançon, ‘Un remblai nommé partage’, *Les Infos*, no. 54, 03/10/2003, 2.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

légitimée par le travail'.³⁷ From this, he concludes that: '[c]ette terre appelle au partage tous ceux qui veulent y vivre une destinée commune.'³⁸

The same perspective appears to have been expressed by Barbançon in the speech he delivered as part of the 24 September 2005 event inaugurating the *Place du Mwâ Kâ, Baie de la Moselle*. LNC includes the following quotes from Barbançon (identified as a 'historien') in its coverage of this event:

*[l]e Mwâ Kâ est dressé en terre de partage. Dans des temps immémoriaux, les Kanak ne marchaient pas ici, car c'était la mer. Il est installé sur des remblais faits de terre kanak et de la sueur des hommes de force des autres ethnies. Il est donc à sa place Baie-de-la-Moselle.*³⁹

However, this perspective on the symbolic implications of the *Mwâ Kâ*'s installation in the *Baie de la Moselle* does not appear from the local written press coverage of this subject to have been appropriated or expressed by any of the other relevant actors or commentators, or, indeed, by the general public.

It might also be noted that, in an article published by LNC in December 2009 in relation to the petition to have the Orly statue removed from the *Place des Cocotiers*, Barbançon is identified as being among the '*Calédoniens qui souhaitent voir le Mwâ Kâ trôner place des Cocotiers*'.⁴⁰ On the subject of the Orly statue's removal, Barbançon is quoted as stating:

*[e]n tant qu'historien, je pense que retirer ce monument serait un signe de régression. Il ne faut pas faire comme si l'histoire n'existait pas. Ce qui me choque, en revanche, ce n'est pas qu'il y ait une statue d'Orly : c'est qu'il n'y ait pas un seul monument consacré à Ataï.*⁴¹

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Anne Gaignaire, 'Des milliers de personnes fêtent le Mwâ Kâ', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2005, 10. A different part of Barbançon's speech is shown in the film created by the Comité on this 2005 event: Comité 150 ans après (2005). Barbançon also appears to have delivered a speech at the 24 September 2006 '*fête de la citoyenneté*', the full text of which was published by LI: Louis-José Barbançon, 'Les pionniers du Mwaa Ka', *Les Infos*, no. 207, 29/09/2006, 1. Another article by Barbançon relating to the *Mwâ Kâ* was also published by *Les Infos* in 2008: Louis-José Barbançon, 'Tribune libre... Conte du 24 septembre, à Jean, Georges, Eric, Pierre, Gaël et les autres', *Les Infos*, no. 308, 03/10/2008, 1.

⁴⁰ Coralie Cochin, 'Qui veut la peau de l'amiral Orly ?', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/12/2009, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

According to Barbançon, installing the *Mwâ Kâ* statue in the *Place des Cocotiers* would go towards redressing the current ‘*déséquilibre*’ between ‘European’ (and colonial) and Kanak symbols and monuments in the square. Indeed, Barbançon is cited by LNC as affirming that:

[I]’alignement du *Mwa Kaa*, de la fontaine *Céleste* et de la statue d’*Olry* symbolisait, en quelque sorte, les trois matériaux qui composent l’histoire calédonienne : le bois de la culture kanak, la pierre du *bagne* et le métal pour le *nickel*.⁴²

However, despite this and other persistent calls expressed by various individuals and groups for the *Mwâ Kâ* to be moved and erected in the *Place des Cocotiers*, any such move appears highly unlikely, especially given the considerable sum of public funds that has already been used in the creation of the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*.

⁴² Ibid.

ANNEX 14

Historical ‘truth’, reconciliation and nation-building

According to Adrian Muckle, the Noumea Accord: *‘témoigne du sentiment que l’avenir du pays dépend de sa capacité à assumer le passé et à affronter l’écriture d’une histoire commune.’*¹ Leaving to one side his critique of this idea of creating a unitary ‘shared history’ for New Caledonia and all of its present-day inhabitants,² it is apparent from this comment by Muckle and from the terms of the Noumea Accord’s Preamble itself that a link is generally posited as necessarily existing between, on the one hand, the public articulation and acknowledgement of the (so-called) historical ‘truth’ in relation to the country’s colonial past (particularly including the wrongs perpetrated against the Kanak people which had often previously been occluded or minimised in the dominant settler histories) and, on the other, the modalities of engaging in a successful process of inter-group reconciliation as a means of ensuring a peaceful, harmonious future for the country. In this regard, the premises of the Noumea Accord’s Preamble as a deliberate contribution to reconciliation in New Caledonia can be likened to the premises behind the history- and memory-work engaged to further reconciliation in other contemporary settler societies, such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa.

Muckle is critical of the historical narrative articulated in the Noumea Accord’s Preamble³ and of the fact that, regardless of this document:

*[i]l n’y a pas encore d’obligation critique envers le (ou de réexamen du) passé colonial et ses « ombres », ni de quelconque reconnaissance de sa présence continue, ni de véritable dialogue entre les différentes visions du passé.*⁴

However, it is important to recognise that the Noumea Accord’s Preamble is an inherently political text, with very specific political objectives, as discussed in the Introduction. Despite the transitional nature of the political structure instituted by the

¹ Muckle (2008: 16).

² Muckle’s critique follows that of Bain Attwood in relation to the Australian case: Muckle (2008: 16-17); and see Attwood (2005a); Attwood (2005b).

³ See Muckle (2007).

⁴ Muckle (2008: 17).

Noumea Accord and the fact that it does not establish New Caledonia as an independent nation-state, the foundational historical narrative contained in the Accord's Preamble can nevertheless be likened in its nature and functions to the foundational historical narratives of nation-states.

In this regard, it is useful to note Bain Attwood's discussion of the function of 'history' in founding and legitimising nations and national identities, particularly in the context of post-colonial settler societies.⁵ Drawing on the work of various prominent academics in relation to nationalism and nation-states, Attwood maintains that: '[t]he primary role of history has been to lend moral legitimacy to a revolutionary phenomenon.'⁶ For, according to Attwood, while foundational national histories have often been produced by historians, they:

are best called myths, since this characterises their function, which is one of providing a simple charter for the nation's present and future rather than seeking to understand the past in all its messiness.⁷

Moreover, Attwood also underlines the importance of forgetting and historical silences in the construction of such legitimating foundational historical narratives of nation-states.⁸

On Attwood's analysis of conventional Western history work:

the historian, deemed to be an outsider, strives to represent the past as it happened and to realise the past's alterity – its difference from present times. This procedure usually rests on an assumption that the past is past and this encourages the historian to treat present and past as disjunctive or at the very least to attend to discontinuities more than continuities between them.⁹

Attwood also maintains in this connection that, 'in the task of understanding, the historian assumes the past can be comprehended and apprehended. Thus mastered, it

⁵ Attwood's primary focus is Australia.

⁶ Attwood (2005a: 13).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Attwood (2005b: 253).

can be put to rest, made to pass away.’¹⁰ This same idea can be seen to inform the assumptions and premises of the recent processes of inter-group reconciliation engaged in various settler societies around the world, mentioned above.

Attwood’s analysis of the nature and function of such conventional, Western-style foundational national histories or ‘myths’ echoes the ‘ethnographic’ and political analyses advanced by various commentators (such as Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Philippe Missotte, Alban Bensa and Michel Naepels) in relation to certain ‘traditional’ Kanak genres of foundational historical narratives relating to specific, small-scale and highly localised socio-political groups.¹¹ These Kanak foundational historical narratives have themselves been identified as informing certain Kanak ‘national’ historical narratives and ‘myths’, elaborated since the emergence of the Kanak independence movement.¹²

Thus, Naepels comments in relation to the Kanak ‘customary’ mode of *accueil* in the Houaïlou region:

*cette dynamique sociale quasi-contractualiste ne fonctionne que par sa dénégarion et son oubli, par l’affirmation du caractère originaire du partage actuel des clans, par la dissimulation des états sociaux antérieurs et par l’oblitération des statuts d’autrefois.*¹³

Following this logic, contemporary Kanak historical narratives relating to specific groups and their past and present relations and locations can be identified as being articulated not as a means of establishing any kind of ‘objective’ ‘truth’ in relation to past situations and events, but rather as a means of legitimating particular socio-political and territorial configurations and claims. The collective elaboration and acceptance of such historical narratives is also central to the successful realisation of processes of reconciliation necessary to establish or re-establish harmony between different groups brought to inhabit the same territorial area. In these respects, such historical narratives can be seen to provide, following Attwood, ‘a simple charter’ for the group in

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ These genres include family and clan genealogies, and foundational ‘myths’ detailing the origin of man and the contemporary presence and relative position and legitimacy of particular groups in specific locations. See Tjibaou (1975); Tjibaou and Missotte (1978); Bensa (1995a: 290-306); Naepels (1998).

¹² See particularly Bensa (1995a: 290-306); and the discussion in Annex 3.

¹³ Naepels (1998: 204).

question's 'present and future rather than seeking to understand the past in all its messiness.'¹⁴

Moreover, this analysis is equally applicable to the foundational historical narrative articulated in the Noumea Accord's Preamble, which can consequently be seen to correspond to the functional imperatives of both conventional Western-style foundational national histories or 'myths', and certain Kanak genres of foundational histories or 'myths'. The Noumea Accord also appears to fulfil the prerequisites, from both of these perspectives, for the successful realisation of a process of inter-group reconciliation. This discussion also intersects with that of 'sovereignty' in relation to the Noumea Accord's Preamble in the Introduction.

¹⁴ Attwood (2005a: 13).

ANNEX 15

‘Signes identitaires’, the CCT and ‘Citizenship Day’: future uncertainties

Problematic ‘signes identitaires’ and local ‘citizenship’

In the terms of the Noumea Accord, the (quasi-national) ‘*signes identitaires du pays*’ and the concept of local ‘citizenship’ (which is potentially to be transformed into a new nationality, independent from French nationality) are intimately implicated in the present and future attribution of sovereignty over the country. The Accord stipulates that sovereignty is to be ‘*partagée*’ for the period of the Accord, during which time the local ‘*signes identitaires*’ and local ‘citizenship’ are to be instituted alongside the national symbols of France, French citizenship and, indeed, French nationality. The Accord also stipulates that sovereignty may potentially become ‘*la pleine souveraineté de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*’, independent from French sovereignty, at the end of the Accord process, at which time the local ‘*signes identitaires*’ and ‘citizenship’ would definitively replace the national symbols of France, French citizenship and French nationality. The rejection by local ‘loyalists’ of this ultimate possibility of the country’s accession to full sovereignty (and, for some, of even the Noumea Accord’s institution of ‘shared sovereignty’) consequently renders their positions in relation to the Accord’s ‘*signes identitaires*’ and ‘citizenship’ at least potentially problematic and, in some cases, entirely antithetical.

Furthermore, in the terms of the Noumea Accord, prominence is given to the expression of ‘Kanak identity’ in and through these new ‘*signes identitaires du pays*’. Thus, despite the evidently strong links between these ‘*signes identitaires*’ and the internally egalitarian category of local ‘citizenship’, the subject of the ‘*signes identitaires*’ is treated in the Noumea Accord’s ‘*Document d’orientation*’ under the section headed ‘*L’identité kanak*’. Moreover, the Accord specifies in this section that: ‘[d]es signes identitaires du pays [...] devront être recherchés en commun, pour exprimer l’identité kanak et le futur partagé entre tous.’¹ The centrality of ‘Kanak identity’ in relation to

¹ Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie signé à Nouméa le 5 mai 1998, ‘*Document d’orientation*’, clause 1.5.

the determination of the country's '*signes identitaires*' is also evident in the Accord's Preamble, which refers to the '*signes identitaires*' primarily in relation to the recognition of 'Kanak identity', stating that:

*[L]a pleine reconnaissance de l'identité kanak conduit à [...] adopter des symboles identitaires exprimant la place essentielle de l'identité kanak du pays dans la communauté de destin acceptée.*²

This centrality of 'Kanak identity' for the determination and character of the country's '*signes identitaires*' is potentially problematic from the perspective of many of the country's non-Kanak 'citizens' (who are also its potential future 'nationals'). In the first instance, it is viewed by some as running counter to what they posit to be the primary (if not, exclusive) vocation of these '*signes identitaires*': to represent the collective identity of all of the country's 'citizens'. This collective identity is conceived by some as being characterised by the population's ethno-cultural diversity, and by others as a new, shared (potentially '*métis*') identity currently in the process of forming and emerging.

The centrality of 'Kanak identity' in the elaboration of the country's new '*signes identitaires*' is also potentially problematic for some 'loyalists' who consider that this might foreshadow the country's potential future constitution as a 'Kanak nation'. The serious and on many occasions violent conflict through the 1980s over the question of the country's independence from France was itself framed as a struggle for and against the creation of a specifically Kanak and Socialist independent nation, as advocated by the pro-independence movement.³ A perception that the country might now be moving towards the realisation of such a 'Kanak nation' through the application of the Noumea Accord and the designation of primarily Kanak '*signes identitaires*' could thus be logically expected to encounter fierce resistance and criticism from many of those in the country's established non-Kanak settler and immigrant populations who were and still remain vehemently opposed to the country's constitution as a 'Kanak nation'.

The substantial issues surrounding the designation of the country's new '*signes identitaires*' has led to considerable political delay in the initiation and finalisation of

² Ibid., 'Préambule', point 5.

³ It should be stressed that, in the public discourse articulated by the leaders of this movement, the Kanak Socialist nation for which they were engaged was never constructed as an exclusionary regime from which all non-Kanak people would be expelled. Nevertheless, this was precisely the manner in which the pro-independence movement's opponents generally represented its objectives.

this process. The first concrete step was only taken in April 2007 (nine years after the Noumea Accord was signed), when a *Comité de pilotage* on the ‘*signes identitaires*’ was created by Déwé Gorodey as the member of the New Caledonian Government responsible for the ‘Citizenship’ portfolio.⁴

While consideration of the most highly contentious ‘*signes identitaires*’, the country’s flag and name, was deferred (and still remains unresolved), the *Comité de pilotage* launched a public competition in relation to the creation of the country’s anthem, motto and bank note designs in late 2007.⁵ An anthem (comprising both music and lyrics, entitled, ‘*Soyons unis, devenons frères*’), a motto (‘*Terre de parole, terre de partage*’) and several options for the country’s bank notes were chosen from the entries of this competition and were adopted and enshrined in a ‘*projet de loi du pays*’ by the New Caledonian Government in June 2008.⁶ This *projet de loi du pays* was subsequently approved by the French *Conseil d’État*,⁷ as required by the *Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*. The *Loi organique* also requires any such *projet de loi du pays* enshrining the final choices of the ‘*signes identitaires*’ to be

⁴ According to LNC’s coverage, this Committee was presided by Déwé Gorodey and comprised 25 members chosen by the Government to include representatives of: the political parties present in the Government, Kanak ‘customary’ authorities; the country’s non-Kanak communities; historical and artistic experts; and ‘civil society’, including notably religious representatives, the country’s two main trade unions, the *Ligue des droits de l’homme* and the *Comité 150 ans après*. ‘Trois signes identitaires ouverts aux concours populaires’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/06/2007, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>; Marc Baltzer, ‘Signes identitaires : Le chantier est ouvert’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/04/2007, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>. Gorodey is quoted by LNC on three occasions as referring to the process of selecting the country’s ‘*signes identitaires*’ as the construction of the ‘*grande case*’ – a political metaphor which she significantly does not similarly appear to have used in relation to the *Mwâ Kâ*. Marc Baltzer, ‘Signes identitaires : Le chantier est ouvert’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/04/2007, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>; ‘Trois signes identitaires ouverts aux concours populaires’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/06/2007, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>; ‘Les signes identitaires prennent doucement du retard’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 21/09/2007, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

⁵ ‘Trois signes identitaires ouverts aux concours populaires’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/06/2007, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>; Philippe Frédère, ‘Signes identitaires, à vos crayons !’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 28/12/2007, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>. According to one report by the daily newspaper, a series of over twenty ‘values’ were identified by the *Comité de pilotage* for incorporation into these new ‘*signes identitaires*’. These ‘values’ were purportedly ordered hierarchically in the following, descending order of importance: ‘*les valeurs de l’accord de Nouméa, les valeurs océaniques, celles de la République française, les valeurs chrétiennes et enfin les « autres valeurs »*.’ ‘Trois signes identitaires ouverts aux concours populaires’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/06/2007, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

⁶ ‘Le pays a son hymne et sa devise’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/06/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

⁷ ‘Le Conseil d’état approuve les signes identitaires’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/10/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

passed by the New Caledonian Congress by a majority of three-fifths of its members.⁸ The Congress's vote on these first three '*signes identitaires*' was, however, further delayed by certain political groups, and the *projet de loi du pays* was only brought before the Congress in August 2010, at which time it was passed by a large majority.⁹

The two remaining '*signes identitaires*' are the most problematic, particularly by reason of the fact that a country's flag and name are highly symbolic of the country's particular political identity and status, and have the most clearly 'national' character. Indeed, LNC itself opened an article on this subject with the warning: '[g]are aux drapeaux, ils font se battre les peuples.'¹⁰ This might also be seen to implicitly recall the violent struggle over the question of New Caledonia's independence during the 1980s, which was itself fought under two opposing flags and names for the country. These two flags (the French flag and the FLNKS/Kanaky flag) and names (New Caledonia and Kanaky), which have been in direct competition since the formation of the 'Provisional Government of Kanaky' followed by the raising of the pro-independence coalition's flag as the national flag of Kanaky on the 1 December 1984, are still considered by many political groups and members of the community as the two primary options competing for designation as Noumea Accord '*signes identitaires*'. However, these two (pro-independence/anti-independence) options are deeply contested, each being broadly interpreted as a symbol of the identity and political position of the opposing political 'camp' and associated social and ethno-cultural group(s),¹¹ and so, as incapable of representing inclusive

⁸ *Loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, article 5.

⁹ Yann Mainguet, 'Le plus dur commence', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 19/08/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>. According to this article, certain changes may still be made to the lyrics of the anthem. LNC reports that: '[I] *Union calédonienne* aurait aimé une référence plus appuyée à l'histoire du pays. Le RUMP, après s'être interrogé sur le « devenons frères » — c'est déjà une réalité selon le parti –, souhaite voir figurer le terme « accueil » dans le texte.' This preference for the inclusion of the term '*accueil*' by the conservative 'loyalist' *Rassemblement-UMP* again highlights the fact that representations of Kanak (and, more broadly, Oceanic) culture as being grounded on certain core principles of '*accueil*' has been a dominant discursive and rhetorical tool used by both pro- and anti-independence political 'camps' in order to discursively assert, explain, reinforce and legitimise the installation of non-Kanak settlers and immigrants in the country.

¹⁰ 'Signes identitaires : trois sur cinq', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 27/06/2008, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

¹¹ On the other hand, despite the frequent contemporary representation of the FLNKS/Kanaky flag as symbolising 'Kanak identity', this view is contested by various individuals who highlight its association with pro-independence politics and its consequent exclusion of those in the Kanak community who are opposed to independence. For example, in March 2011, LNC reported the view of Nidoïsh Naisseline that: '[s]i le drapeau FLNKS représente l'identité kanak, [...] « je dis qu'il y a tricherie. Car les Kanak du RPCR sont aussi Kanak que nous. L'identité, c'est nous tous ».' Yann Mainguet, 'Qui votera pour ce drapeau ?', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/03/2011, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

‘*signes identitaires*’ linked to the ‘*destin commun*’ to be shared by all of the country’s ‘citizens’ in line with the socio-political project of the Noumea Accord.

Frogier’s two-flags initiative and ‘Citizenship Day’ at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* in 2010

In February 2010, Pierre Frogier proposed that the FLNKS/Kanaky flag should be officially raised alongside the French flag throughout New Caledonia as a means of symbolising the ‘two legitimacies’ now coexisting in New Caledonia. This proposition was initially met with support from pro-independence political parties and organisations,¹² but a certain degree of resistance and opposition from some ‘loyalist’ parties, politicians and militants, including in particular Philippe Gomès’s *Calédonie Ensemble*, which identified Frogier’s initiative as running counter to the spirit and terms of the Noumea Accord agreement and which advocated for the creation and designation of a new flag representing the ‘common destiny’ to be shared by all as a ‘*signe identitaire du pays*’.¹³

Frogier’s initiative was supported by the State at the *Comité des signataires* in June 2010, although it was still represented by President Nicolas Sarkozy as one step on the path to the designation of a single flag ‘recognised by all’.¹⁴ On the 13 July 2010, a formal ‘*vœu*’ supporting the official simultaneous raising of both flags in New

¹² Yann Mainguet and Henri Lepot, ‘Les indépendantistes saluent l’idée de Frogier’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 11/02/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

¹³ P.Ch., ‘Le drapeau selon Calédonie ensemble’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 11/07/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>; Philippe Frédière, ‘Démonstration de force de Calédonie ensemble’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/08/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>; Yann Mainguet, ‘Le parti crie au « déni de démocratie caractérisé »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 18/08/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

¹⁴ François-Xavier Guillermin and Philippe Minard, ‘Accord sur tout, ou presque’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 28/06/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>. In contrast, Frogier was cited by the local daily as affirming shortly after the *Comité des signataires*: ‘*je n’accepterai pas un troisième drapeau. Il entérinerait l’idée d’indépendance, ou de petite nation. Je me mettrai en travers de ça.*’ Philippe Frédière and David Martin, ‘Pierre Frogier revient rassuré de Paris’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 02/07/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>. However, Frogier’s position on this question appears to have subsequently become more moderate. In August, he was cited by the daily newspaper as affirming: ‘*« ma conviction, c’est qu’il est prématuré de rechercher un drapeau du pays selon les directives du point 1.5 de l’accord de Nouméa ». Plus encore, « ma conviction, c’est qu’il faudra du temps mais que la Nouvelle-Calédonie finira par s’approprier ces deux drapeaux qui représentent sa part mélanésienne et océanienne indissociable de son identité européenne et française ».*’ Yann Mainguet, ‘Le plus dur commence’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 19/08/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>. See also ‘Ils ont répondu à vos questions’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 03/03/2011, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

Caledonia was voted by a majority of the New Caledonian Congress.¹⁵ Frogier is reported by LNC as having affirmed in his address to the Congress:

« [f]aire flotter ensemble ces deux drapeaux », « c'est la traduction, la continuité et l'aboutissement de la poignée de main des accords de Matignon. » C'est même, « – j'en ai la conviction – le renouvellement de l'acte fondateur du pacte social de la Nouvelle-Calédonie contemporaine ». ¹⁶

Two days later, a series of 'customary' ceremonies (incorporating notably members of the *Sénat coutumier* and representatives of both pro- and anti-independence political parties and organisations with two notable exceptions: Palika and *Calédonie ensemble*) were organised in Noumea at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* and the *Sénat coutumier* to mark the newly officially sanctioned raising of the French and FLNKS/Kanaky flags together and to prepare the way for an official State ceremony of the raising of both flags at the Noumean residence of the French High Commissioner on the 17 July during the visit of Prime Minister François Fillon.¹⁷ Despite Frogier's persistent boycott of and public opposition to the 24 September events organised around the *Mwâ Kâ* from 2004 to 2009, he attended and spoke during the ceremony at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*. Indeed, according to LNC's report, Frogier:

a relu une partie de son discours prononcé le 24 septembre 2003 lors de l'inauguration du Mwa Ka : « C'est à la fois une histoire qui se termine mais aussi et surtout le fondement, l'assise, d'une histoire qu'ensemble et en commun, nous avons entrepris d'écrire. » ¹⁸

Palika's Paul Néaoutyine was subsequently cited by the daily newspaper as characterising these ceremonies as '*une instrumentalisation de la coutume et du*

¹⁵ « La Calédonie en paix avec elle-même », *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 14/07/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Philippe Frédière, Sylvain Amiotte and Xavier Heyraud, 'Le drapeau FLNKS hissé au Mwa Ka et au Sénat', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 16/07/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>. See also Yann Mainguet, Philippe Frédière, Sylvain Amiotte and Xavier Heyraud, 'Le pays aux deux drapeaux', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 19/07/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

¹⁸ Philippe Frédière, Sylvain Amiotte and Xavier Heyraud, 'Le drapeau FLNKS hissé au Mwa Ka et au Sénat', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 16/07/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

Premier ministre'.¹⁹ Moreover, on several occasions Néaoutyine and Palika highlighted that raising both flags has been common practice throughout the Northern and Islands Provinces since 1988, and expressed their position in favour of the designation of a single flag as one of the country's '*signes identitaires*' in line with the process prescribed by the Noumea Accord.²⁰ The event organised to celebrate 'Citizenship Day' at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* on the 24 September 2008 had itself included the joint raising of the French and the FLNKS/Kanaky flags, along with the presentation of the Government's newly composed proposition for the country's anthem.²¹ However, this joint flag raising in 2008 was not repeated at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* 'Citizenship Day' event on the 24 September 2009, the organisation of which had reportedly been '*reprise en main*' by the New Caledonian Government.²²

As part of the 24 September 2010 'Citizenship Day' celebrations organised around the *Mwâ Kâ* (which incorporated the closing ceremonies and '*coutumes*' of the 4th Festival of Melanesian Arts)²³ the two flags were officially raised and the country's anthem was performed for the first time since its official adoption by the New Caledonian Congress.²⁴ Pierre Frogier was represented at the event by Henriette Falelavaki (a *Rassemblement-UMP* member of the Southern Province Assembly), who read a 'message' written by Frogier in which linked his changed position in relation to the 24 September event in 2010 to the official adoption of the raising of the French and

¹⁹ YM, 'Le FLNKS en crise ouverte', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 13/08/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

²⁰ See, for example, YM, '« Lever les deux drapeaux, ce n'est pas une nouveauté », *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 16/07/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

²¹ LNC report did, however, indicate that some of the crowd present at this event was critical of this joint flag raising and the absence of a new, unifying flag, as prescribed by the Noumea Accord. Yann Mainguet, 'Que faire du 24 Septembre ?', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 23/09/2008, 2; Philippe Frédière, 'Le 24 Septembre célébré dans la divergence', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2008, 3.

²² Sylvain Amiotte, 'Une fête en construction', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 25/09/2009, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

²³ This event was held from the 12 to the 24 September at various locations throughout the *Grande Terre* and the Loyalty Islands. In contrast to the 8th Festival of Pacific Arts hosted by New Caledonia in 2000, the local participation in this 2010 event was multi-ethnic/cultural in character. Indeed, '*promouvoir la diversité culturelle*' was one of the three primary objectives of the 4th Festival of Melanesian Arts determined by its local organisers, in direct reference to the socio-political project of the Noumea Accord. See COFAM (2010: 5).

²⁴ Sylvain Amiotte, 'Un 24 Septembre tourné vers l'avenir', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

FLNKS/Kanaky flags. Indeed, Frogier suggested that the recognition of the two flags ‘completed’ the *Mwâ Kâ* initiative.²⁵

Local political turmoil and the crystallisation of new alliances in 2011

In February 2011 the UC brought about the fall of the New Caledonian Government headed by Gomès, in response to which *Calédonie Ensemble* brought about the successive fall of the three following newly elected Governments headed by Harold Martin in a strategy designed to provoke the State to call Provincial elections. The resulting political crisis and institutional instability lasted for a period of several months before a legislative amendment was passed by the French Parliament restricting the use of the legal mechanism through which the fall of the Government can be triggered to once every 18 months.²⁶ The reason advanced by the UC for its initial sanction of the Gomès Government was the fact that the FLNKS/Kanaky flag had not been raised alongside the French flag outside the Municipal Councils in a number of New Caledonian *communes*, purportedly on Gomès’s request.²⁷ *Calédonie Ensemble*, Palika and the LKS identified the flag issue as simply a pretext for the UC’s actions (which were subsequently effectively supported by the *Parti Travailleiste*, RUMP and *Avenir Ensemble*).

This episode signalled a new configuration of political alliances which cut across the ‘traditional’ cleavage between pro- and anti-independence ‘blocks’ and led to the

²⁵ Thus, according to LNC’s report: ‘Henriette Falelavaki a parlé du 24 Septembre comme d’un « jour historique, celui de la rencontre de nos deux légitimités ». « L’idée du Mwâ kâ, il y a sept ans était une idée généreuse, mais elle était incomplète. [...] Ces dernières années, nous ne nous sommes pas reconnus dans cette manifestation. J’ai le sentiment aujourd’hui que les choses ont changé. » *Ce qui a changé, poursuit le texte de Pierre Frogier, c’est la reconnaissance des deux drapeaux, qu’il a initiée.* « Deux drapeaux pour un destin commun, pour fédérer nos différences, pour engager notre avenir. » Sylvain Amiotte, ‘Un 24 Septembre tourné vers l’avenir’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 26/09/2010, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

²⁶ Loi organique n°2011-870 du 25 juillet 2011 modifiant l’article 121 de la loi organique n°99-209 du 19 mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, n° 0171, 26 July 2011, 12705, <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?sessionId=8B119D8A988077EC4C3CCCD1D1568FC8.tpdjo03v_1?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000024396835&dateTexte=20110726>. For a brief summary of the political crisis, see Bérengère Nauleau and Yann Mainguet, ‘Nos hommes politiques ne connaissent que la crise’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 03/08/2011, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

²⁷ ‘L’UC veut la tête de Philippe Gomès’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 14/02/2011, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

election of ‘*indépendantiste*’ Roch Wamytan as the President of the New Caledonian Congress on the votes of the UC–FLNKS, *Parti Travailleiste*, RUMP and *Avenir Ensemble* groups in the Congress.²⁸ Nevertheless, despite these new alliances, RUMP indicated that it would not support a ‘*proposition de loi du pays*’ designating the FLNKS/Kanaky flag as the country’s ‘*signe identitaire*’²⁹ – an initiative which the UC had announced for the immediate future at the time it overthrew the Gomès Government, although no such *proposition de loi* has been formally tabled in the Congress to date.

During this political crisis, public debate on the issue of the flag also ran high. A newly formed community group, the *Collectif pour un drapeau commun calédonien*, organised a series of public initiatives and rallies in favour of the creation and designation of a new, so-called ‘*drapeau commun*’ as the country’s Noumea Accord ‘*signe identitaire*’. In April 2011, with the prospect of one rally organised by the *Collectif pour un drapeau commun calédonien* and an opposing rally organised in favour of the FLNKS/Kanaky flag by the *Collectif pour le drapeau du pays Kanaky* (animated by, amongst others, *Parti Travailleiste* and UC militants) taking place in the streets of Noumea on the same day, the High Commissioner prohibited both events at the last minute, citing the potential risk to ‘*l’ordre public*’.³⁰

²⁸ Yann Mainguet, ‘Un indépendantiste à la tête du Congrès’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 03/04/2011, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>; ‘Un proche avenir en pointillé’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/04/2011, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>; Ph.F., ‘Wamytan réélu au perchoir’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 20/08/2011, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

²⁹ YM, ‘Le Rump votera contre le drapeau’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 15/03/2011, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>; Yann Mainguet, ‘Qui votera pour ce drapeau ?’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 17/03/2011, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

³⁰ Ph.F., ‘Les manifestations interdites à Nouméa’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 03/04/2011, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>. LNC’s coverage suggests that members of the *Comité 150 ans après* were involved in the counter-rally, which was organised to take place at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*: see Alexandre Wibart, ‘Une nouvelle marche ?’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 03/04/2011, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>. More than simply being in favour of the FLNKS/Kanaky flag, this counter-rally was organised ‘in defence’ of that flag and against the idea of a new flag which would result in the FLNKS/Kanaky flag being taken down – an outcome staunchly opposed by those behind this rally: see, for example, Yann Mainguet and Philippe Frédière, ‘Face-à-face samedi ?’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 29/03/2011, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

The uncertain future of the CCT and ‘Citizenship Day’ at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*

As noted in the Conclusion, many of the same issues and persisting tensions associated with the designation of the country’s flag also lie at the heart of the present uncertainties associated with the future of both the CCT and the annual ‘Citizenship Day’ event organised at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*.

Full responsibility for the ADCK and the CCT is to be transferred from the French State to the New Caledonian Government (within the framework of the Noumea Accord) on the 1 January 2012.³¹ In an interview with LNC in July 2011 the CCT’s new Director, Emmanuel Tjibaou (son of Jean-Marie and Marrie-Claude Tjibaou), emphasised particularly the need for the Centre to develop its outreach programs, stating: ‘[i]l faut faire sortir le centre de ses murs, aller dans les quartiers.’³² While this orientation might be seen to bolster the Centre’s local relevance and prominence, following its transfer to the New Caledonian Government the funding allocated to the CCT (and the ADCK) will necessarily be considered alongside the funding needs of a number of other local cultural institutions.

In 2009 a project to entirely renovate, remodel and extend the building, collections and museographical and representational focus of the Museum of New Caledonia was announced.³³ As stated on the Museum’s website, this project is ‘basé sur le concept d’un musée de société calédonien.’³⁴ The website further affirms that the Museum:

*souhaite s’inscrire dans le processus de construction d’une communauté de destin porté par l’Accord de Nouméa et présenter une vitrine de la société calédonienne, où la civilisation kanak conserverait une place centrale, dans son histoire, sa diversité, ses expressions artistiques et culturelles et dans son environnement régional Océanie-Pacifique.*³⁵

³¹ Résolution n° 97 du 30 novembre 2010 relative au transfert de l’Etat à la Nouvelle-Calédonie de l’agence de développement de la culture kanak, *Journal Officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, 9 December 2010, 9772, <<http://www.juridoc.gouv.nc>>. In this connection, see also Gorodey (2008).

³² Patricia Calonne, ‘« Le destin commun, tout le monde doit le créer »’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 15/07/2011, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

³³ Philippe Frédière, ‘Un musée pour tous les Calédoniens’, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 24/04/2009, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

³⁴ Musée de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, ‘Historique du musée’, <<http://www.museenouvellecaledonie.nc/portal/page/portal/smp/musee/historique>>.

³⁵ Ibid.

In contrast, despite the CCT's progressively inclusive museographical practices and public programs, the Centre's primary focus and orientation remains Kanak, particularly given its close institutional association with the ADCK. While the CCT will doubtless retain a certain prominence, its transfer to the New Caledonian Government, the persisting tensions between the approaches of various local political parties to the politics of Kanak culture and identity in contemporary New Caledonia, and the expanded focus and role of the Museum of New Caledonia in the future may well alter the current equilibrium between and relative prominence of the country's major cultural institutions. At this particular juncture, the CCT's future is possibly the most uncertain it has ever been since its 1998 inauguration.

In 2011 the '*Journée de la citoyenneté*' was incorporated into a week-long '*Fête de la citoyenneté*' organised around the theme '*Assumons ensemble notre histoire commune*'. The associated events began at Balade in the Northern Province at the site of the monument marking the 1853 '*prise de possession*' and ended in Noumea with events at the CCT, the Museum of New Caledonia and the *Place du Mwâ Kâ*, after having passed through several other *communes*. At Balade on the 24 September, official speeches were delivered by a number of local politicians, including Déwé Gorodey, Harold Martin, Roch Wamytan and Pierre Frogier, and the two flags were raised simultaneously.

In his speech, Frogier again justified his involvement in and support for this *Fête de la citoyenneté* in reference to his two-flags initiative, but also in reference to comments made by President Nicolas Sarkozy during his recent New Caledonian visit on the occasion of the fourteenth Pacific Games in August.³⁶ Sarkozy had affirmed in relation to '*la citoyenneté néo-calédonienne*':

*j'ai donné mon accord pour que vous y travailliez, de façon positive, pour que vous réfléchissiez sur ce qui vous rapproche, sur ce que vous pouvez construire ensemble. [...] La République est suffisamment solide pour supporter que des hommes de bonne volonté débattent ici de cette question.*³⁷

³⁶ Frogier (2011: 3-4).

³⁷ Sarkozy (2011: 5). It might be noted that, while elsewhere in this speech Sarkozy affirmed Kanak and European culture as the '*deux cultures [qui] fondent l'identité calédonienne*', he also identified biological '*métissage*' as representing the 'natural' path to the country's peaceful future, effectively mobilising the same discourse as LNC in its 2003 coverage of the 150th anniversary of the country's '*prise de*

In his own speech on the 24 September, Frogier affirmed in relation to the '*deux drapeaux additionnés*': '*peut-être permettent-ils d'esquisser les contours de la citoyenneté calédonienne dont l'Accord de Nouméa nous demande de poser les bases.*'³⁸ Moreover, Frogier contended that local 'citizenship' had to this point remained '*une coquille vide*' by reason of its restriction to legal categorisations and its posited use as '*un instrument d'exclusion alors qu'elle doit être synonyme d'adhésion et d'intégration.*'³⁹ Frogier proposed that '*[l]a citoyenneté calédonienne doit être basée sur l'addition des valeurs que nous partageons et dont nous trouvons les racines dans nos cultures respectives*', identified respectively as the 'Melanesian' values of *accueil*, respect and humility, and the French Republican values of freedom, equality and fraternity.⁴⁰ Furthermore, Frogier went on to state:

*je vous propose que ce lien entre les femmes et les hommes de Nouvelle-Calédonie, soit le geste coutumier, qui en plus de sa valeur spécifiquement coutumière, pourrait devenir ce geste d'amitié, que chacun intègrerait dans ses pratiques. Ce geste deviendrait un signe d'alliance, de lien, et donc d'unité entre toutes nos communautés. Ainsi grâce à ce geste partagé par tous qui deviendra le symbole visible de la citoyenneté calédonienne.*⁴¹

Frogier also affirmed in this connection that '*la citoyenneté calédonienne*' must be expanded '*pour y accueillir tous ceux qui partagent nos valeurs, qui veulent participer à ce vivre ensemble et être acteur du destin commun.*'⁴²

Despite the fact that this discourse can be seen to work to undermine the legal restrictions imposed on the category of local 'citizenship' by the Noumea Accord

possession' by France (discussed in Chapter Three). Thus, Sarkozy affirmed in his speech: '*[c]es deux drapeaux, parce qu'ils flottent ensemble, traduisent [...] le fait que la Calédonie est une terre de partage. Dans de nombreuses familles, des enfants ou des petits enfants ont tout à la fois du sang kanak, européen, métropolitain, polynésien, wallisien. Vos enfants vivent, au plus profond de leur chair, la réalité et la diversité de la société calédonienne. Ils l'incarnent dans leurs gènes. Vos enfants sont le visage réconcilié du futur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Alors que l'Accord de Nouméa nous demande de « poser les bases d'une citoyenneté de la Nouvelle-Calédonie », peut-être est-elle tout simplement en train de se construire, naturellement, sous nos yeux*': *ibid.*

³⁸ Frogier (2011: 3).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

agreement which form the very backbone of this category's meaning and legitimacy (particularly from the perspective of its pro-independence proponents), Frogier's proposal relating to '*le geste coutumier*' in this speech appears to have led to a ceremony seemingly in acceptance of this new approach on the premises of the Southern Province headquarters in Noumea three days later. According to the *Rassemblement*–UMP website, this ceremony was attended by, amongst others, Pierre Frogier, Gaël Yano, Harold Martin, Roch Wamytan, Charles Pidjot and the majority of Southern Province elected representatives.⁴³ The website states that:

*les responsables politiques indépendantistes ont [...] tenu à répondre à cette proposition [de Frogier fait à Balade] en faisant un geste coutumier. Hier soir [le 27 septembre], ils ont lié, par un manou, un bois représentant l'esprit de la terre, aux deux drapeaux qui flottent désormais dans l'enceinte de la province. Ils y ont attaché une plante, la cordyline, qui symbolise la vie.*⁴⁴

Wamytan is cited on the website as having identified this '*coutume*' as affirming the inscription of the 'French and Kanak flags' in the new symbolism and politics being pursued by those present at the ceremony. Indeed, Wamytan is cited as having stated:

*en écho aux déclarations de Pierre FROGIER : « Cette coutume-là dit aussi, donne aussi des valeurs qui sont des valeurs universelles, qui sont aussi représentées par le bleu blanc rouge, liberté, égalité, fraternité. Cette coutume, c'est la coutume des Mélanésiens et des Océaniens, mais c'est votre coutume aussi, c'est à nous maintenant cette coutume-la ! C'est quoi ? C'est le respect, c'est l'humilité, c'est la tolérance, c'est l'acceptation de l'autre et c'est les liens par le manou qui nous unit chacun d'entre nous, parce que nous sommes liés par notre histoire, et comme aussi ça a été dit à Balade, nous sommes aussi liés par le sang. On est tous embarqués dans la même pirogue. »*⁴⁵

While this ceremony was not covered by LNC, in its (relatively piecemeal) coverage of the 2011 *Fête de la citoyenneté* the newspaper highlighted Frogier's proposition in

⁴³ Rassemblement–UMP, 'Citoyenneté', 2011, < <http://www.rassemblement.nc/content/citoyennete>>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

relation to '*le geste coutumier*' and its future appropriation by all of the country's communities as a means of giving visible, concrete form to '*la citoyenneté calédonienne*', as defined by him.⁴⁶ However, through the reproduction of quotations from a range of individuals, Frogier's proposition was effectively represented by the newspaper as problematic, as needing further clarification, as potentially a cynical political manoeuvre, and ultimately as producing mixed and often ambivalent and negative reactions amongst members of the country's Kanak and non-Kanak communities alike.⁴⁷ The future of Frogier's position was also questioned, the newspaper concluding: '*[I]e projet du sénateur dépassera-t-il le stade de l'annonce ? L'avenir le dira.*'⁴⁸ LNC also highlighted certain controversial aspects of RUMP politician Gaël Yanno's public discourse articulated on the occasion of the *Fête de la citoyenneté*, relating particularly to the origins of 'the Kanak people' in colonisation itself and to the purportedly narrow, closed and exclusionary meaning and effect of the category of local 'citizenship'.⁴⁹

Further questions were raised in relation to the 2011 *Fête de la citoyenneté* in the daily newspaper through its reproduction of the following comments made by Paul Néaoutyine in the wake of the event:

*[n]ous constatons qu'il y a eu des tensions autour de cette cérémonie du 24 Septembre dans la mesure où le Comité 150 ans après avait envisagé que l'on descende définitivement le drapeau bleu-blanc-rouge à Balade [...]. [...] Quelques jours plus tard, certaines personnes étaient dans le Sud pour attacher les deux drapeaux à un poteau sculpté, on ne sait pas ce que ça signifie [...].*⁵⁰

Overall, this coverage tends to highlight the many persisting issues and tensions surrounding the meaning and future of the category of local 'citizenship' and the

⁴⁶ YM, 'Entre scepticisme et opposition', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 03/10/2011, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Tomislav Govekar, 'Le Palika réaffirme son positionnement', *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 05/10/2011, accessed online at <<http://www.lnc.nc>>. It is unknown to the present author what role (if any) the *Comité 150 ans après* ultimately played in the organisation of the 2011 *Fête de la citoyenneté*. The second sentence of this passage refers to the ceremony on the 27 September at the headquarters of the Southern Province.

associated public events now organised by the New Caledonian Government to mark the 24 September anniversary each year at the *Place du Mwâ Kâ* and elsewhere. Significant questions also surround Frogier's most recent proposition (and its apparent acceptance by certain pro-independence politicians) in relation to his purportedly open, inclusive and unifying construction of local 'citizenship' and '*le geste coutumier*', particularly in terms of the degree to which the 'Melanesian values' identified by Frogier (*accueil*, respect and humility) are ultimately remodelled by and subordinated to the French Republican 'values' of freedom, equality and fraternity he simultaneously affirms.